

Divine Grace *and* Man

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DESCLEE COMPANY

NEW YORK - TOURNAI - PARIS - ROME

1962

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number : 61-15719

Printed and bound in Belgium by DESCLÉE & Cie, Tournai.

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FOREWORD

Some time, in the year 1954, I had occasion to lecture on some ideas of this book at the "Circle for the Study of Man," founded at Antwerp and still run by Professor R. Dellaert, of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. Teachers and youth leaders urged me to work out a number of other subjects proposed for discussion, first, at the "Commission Internationale du Plein Air" held in 1955 at Freiburg im Breisgau, and later at the Paris "Commission Catholique des Colonies de Vacances" of 1956, presided over by His Excellency Msgr. Piérard. The year after, I had an equally sympathetic audience at the "Grail House" in Edinburgh, Scotland. These successive discussions led me on to write a more technical article for the International Review of Religious Education, Lumen Vitae (Brussels), "Towards a Psychology of Divine Grace" (English edition, vol. XII, pp. 203-232).

Friends wanted a Flemish translation of this article. They were of the opinion that the work, re-written in less technical terminology, would greatly interest a wide Flemish and Dutch public, increasingly mindful of religious problems.

The present slender volume is published from a motive of deep gratitude towards the Catholic laymen in Flanders whom I had the privilege of meeting at numerous religious study-circles in towns big and small.

A theologian, or a priest, could hardly envision a more enviable task than that of making known the glories of the faith. The attention, at once fervent and recollected, of so many of my countrymen as they listened to me, was most rewarding. In the face of the longing for religious knowledge evidenced today in so many lay circles, silence is no longer permissible. Besides, it is a tradition in our country that theologians, as for instance Blessed John Ruysbroeck, do not confine themselves

to the pursuit of pure knowledge, but feel a responsibility towards God's people, the souls consecrated to Him in Baptism and Confirmation. Let us add: the lessons a theologian learns from such contacts with the laity cannot easily be overrated.

In gratitude and homage, then, I dedicate this little work to the adult Catholics of my country. To them do we owe it that, in recent years, the preaching of the word of God has been lifted out of the rut of routine and formalism, and that sermons and religious instruction ring once more with something of the "Eu-aggelion," the Good Tiding.

INTRODUCTION

This book on grace has been written not without serious apprehension. It is no laughing matter to provide within the limits of a slender volume all that is necessary for an adequate, clear insight into one of the most central and most debated tracts of our Christian belief. Students of theology attend lectures on it for a whole year, four times a week; and usually they do not succeed in touching on all the aspects of this rich and intricate subject. The writing of a book on grace is not made easier for an author when he realizes that most of the prospective readers are unfamiliar with theological methods.

Viewed from God's side, grace signifies, before all else, the wealth and majesty of God's love. Besides enfolding mankind as a whole, this love also embraces each single human being, as he is in his innermost nature and in his own peculiar situation in life. Grace, seen from God's side, signifies the sheer reality of the Blessed Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit. It means our eternal election by the Father, the cardinal historical fact of the Redemption by the Son dying on the Cross and rising on Easter Sunday, the Lord's enduring presence in our history till the last day, through the power of the Holy Spirit, — a presence coming to us through the Church, the Sacraments and the preaching of the word of the Gospel.

Viewed from man's side, grace signifies rebirth in Christ. It denotes a mysterious, but none the less eminently real, stream of life which wells up from the deepest strata of our being where it rests securely in the creative hand of God, up through all the stages of a slow development of our personality, irrigating and permeating the innumerable areas of our complex psychology,

yet never ceasing to be a divine life, a purely gratuitous gift of a constantly renewed and freely bestowed love of God. In the language of the Greek Fathers and of the Byzantine theologians, grace is a new light which, on the day of our Baptism, rises like dawn on the dim remote horizon of our personal self, and in the soft morning light of life dispels by slow degrees the darkness of sin and weakness; all this in preparation for, and as a pledge of the midday splendor of a radiant eternity.

Every portion of our being has to be regenerated by grace: spirit and person, intellect and will, all our spiritual powers; from the psychic ego with its own peculiar temperament and character, down to the lower psychosomatic regions of our animal bodily life, with its obscure drives, its countless determinisms, its subconscious or unconscious or semiconscious reactions: *all these* have to be reborn through grace.

Grace unites God and man. More exactly, grace is God's way of meeting man whom He came in search of and found lost in the solitude of an earthly sinful nature. In this meeting, God's love takes to itself man as he is, the whole of him, and makes of him a child of the Father, with and in the only begotten Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Grace is the marvelous point of contact between two worlds: the world of the Triune infinitude, and that of the utter nothingness which is man.

The writing of this book, notwithstanding its inherent difficulties, has cheered the author. He felt he was working for those Christian lay folk who, of their own accord, have started to beg for a deeper understanding of their religion. As a Lutheran lay movement in Northern Germany puts it in its striking motto: "The laity demand their Church!" our educated men and women look increasingly for an answer to the pressing questions of our times. Throughout the country, in places small and big, people are bestirring themselves, seeking an enlightened

faith. Shall we at long last witness the end of that aggravating, smug, inert and conventional Catholic life which carefully avoids religious problems, dodges the subtler queries of conscience, satisfies itself with a set of religious practices (euphemistically called "blind faith"), and resorts to the excitement of mass demonstrations to make up for the absence of a convinced Christian policy? The new movement towards a more enlightened practice of the faith is only beginning; it resembles the hushed fleeting breath of early spring... May it grow, go forward with the inevitableness of a phenomenon of nature! Better, may it bring about a thorough awakening in the Spirit!

The time has come to put a stop to a critical situation threatening the faith. The educated classes take it for granted that general culture, professional knowledge and skill, keep pace with man's growth in responsibility towards the state and human society. Should a Christian not realize that he has to outgrow the stage of immature religious knowledge and practice of his high school and college days? The men and the women of our country should be possessed of the same dash and daring, the same eagerness for study, work and responsibility as are shown by those of other nations.

A lack of balance between secular culture and religious knowledge might be condoned, perhaps, in periods of quiet and peace, when traditional customs rule uncontested. In times of stress and strain, however, when many ways of life are breaking up and new ones are still unformed, the interior tension between an underdeveloped religious consciousness and a fully developed professional competence can only raise doubts and dismay in the hearts of good Christians, and bitterness and defection among the lukewarm.

It is by no means easy for an adult to approach matters of faith with an unprejudiced mind. Mathematicians, doctors, scientists, psychologists, lawyers and politicians unconsciously tend to bring to their study of religion the trusted canons of their respective specialities. They reflect on religion — and "do

theology" — either in the light of scientific methods, or from a political angle, or in conformity with the formal precision of a jurist.

Now, theology is a science like the others. Like them, it has its own proper object and is governed by its own special laws and methods. To these, theology must hold fast if it is to be true to itself.

These introductory remarks will justify the divisions of our book:

1. What is theology and what are its methods?
2. What is grace? — or: the application of theological methods to our subject matter.
3. What should man expect from grace? — or: glimpses into some important points of contact between the theology of grace and profane human sciences.

What *Part I* Is Theology ?

Any one familiar with the history of the sciences will know that our modern sciences began their triumphal march into western culture on the day they broke loose from Greek, Arabic and scholastic philosophy, *struck their own path and followed their own laws*. To take just one or two instances: medicine hovered for centuries between natural philosophy, black art and common sense, as long as the doctor cared more for Aristotle's four elements than for the etiology of the sickness he had to cure. Astronomy, notwithstanding remarkable discoveries by Chinese, Chaldean, Egyptian, Phoenician and Arabic observers, hesitated between astrology, poetical fantasy and mathematical precision as long as it was pre-occupied with theology, natural philosophy and the Bible, or with fate rather than the patient systematic investigation of facts. In those days, it was often the case as with the famous logician who said: "It is logical, therefore true! Hang the facts!" ("C'est logique, donc c'est vrai. Tant pis pour les faits!").

The cultured man of today is justified in protesting when views that have nothing to do with strictly medical research (as, for instance, the rigid lines of Marxist orthodoxy) are imposed upon men of science. Only foolish, untutored minds will want, on sentimental or nationalist grounds, to tamper with or to garble well-established medical experience. It is no fault of the doctor if he happens upon antipathetic microbes.

Theology Has its Own Nature and Method.

We have grown rather sensitive on the question of the autonomy of the sciences; in some ways, perhaps too sensitive. This is often the case when a scientific attitude has become so aggressive that it demands for the sciences an unrestricted autonomy, and then, unconsciously maybe, proceeds to dabble in theology and philosophy. Catholics themselves are not always prepared to acknowledge that medicine, both in theory and practice, may have to take into account higher claims, such as those of moral theology and conscience.

It is all very well to decry attempts to interfere with the legitimately autonomous exercise of human thought and power in their rightful sphere; but then, we should be ready to respect the claims of theology in its own sphere.

It is a joy to see how present day laymen warm up to religious problems. And the joy is genuine! But it makes one shudder to hear what some of them have to say in conversation, or to read what is printed in articles, books or book reviews, — as was the case not so long ago after the publication of Papini's famous book on "Satan." On such occasions, one gathers the impression that, in some sections of society, an encouragement to personal study of religious doctrine means a signal for a free-for-all-fight. Sentiment takes the field; fancy and emotion come to the fore, but especially personal animosity against a self-important theologian, a somewhat assertive parish priest or religious with naïve views of God and His designs. Such dispositions do not make for a sound frame of mind or fruitful religious study; nor would they in other fields of learning. Such ill-conceived displays of sentiment need not cause undue alarm; but Rome has more than once thought it wise to raise a warning voice against an irresponsible spirit of destructiveness and anarchy.

It is quite normal that intelligent laymen, acutely aware of the needs of the time, should want to deny the monopoly of religious study to scholastic theologians who show themselves over-confident perhaps in their monastic or clerical speciality and are in the habit of knitting their brows whenever a layman ventures upon a fresh theological idea. Difficulties do not come from the side of the laity only. I remember the sour remarks a curate vented at the close of a meeting for religious study: he could not stomach that lay people should be served with three arguments in favor of a theological thesis, when he himself had been given only one at the seminary.

This sort of thing happens in all domains of knowledge. Each rising generation is out to secure recognition for certain data of experience and finds itself at odds with their predecessors in the fields, whether these be great scholars, retired now and resting on their laurels, or less famous disciples. It is not the object of science that is at stake, but certain particular positions and defective, outdated methods. Why, one may ask, would this not apply to matters theological? Why frown on all and every attempt to renew theology? to make it intelligible to the present generation, to look for answers adapted to our times rather than hold on to solutions suitable to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? It should not be forgotten, though, that a fruit-tree is rejuvenated by lopping and grafting, not by wholesale uprooting. A misguided zeal may lose sight of this danger.

Some words may be quoted here from Cardinal J. H. Newman, one of the first men of our age to realize the need of a laity thoroughly grounded in religious matters: "I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious; but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they believe and what they do not, who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity." (1)

[(1) *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*, London, 1857², 360.

Theology and the Method of Positive Sciences.

Theology forms a branch of learning that, in some respects, has much in common with the positive sciences. The latter always start, consciously and methodically, from accurately chosen experimental phenomena. The facts of experience are marshalled, interpreted in the light of their orderly recurrence; their laws are established, classified in ever-widening hypotheses, and worked out into increasingly comprehensive syntheses; but contact with the facts is never lost. New data and more accurate experimentation, suggested by the first discovered laws and hypotheses, are designed to extend those same laws, to improve upon them and shade them in their constant interactions. Whoever neglects the facts indulges, not in science, but in fantasy.

Theology proceeds in very much the same way, but along its own lines. Its basic object is not so much a body of truths, a determined doctrine or system, nor even a definite philosophy of life; it is first and foremost the fundamental fact that *God has spoken to man in history*.

Whether it is studied according to the strictly scientific lines of the professional theology, or after the fashion of the life-centred theology of the lay groups, it will always be Revelation that provides the subject-matter for consideration. Revelation, God's word spoken to man, is also the primordial dominant fact of salvation. We are told so in the solemn opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, having spoken of old to our forefathers through the prophets, by many degrees and in many ways, has at last in these days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed Heir of all things, and through whom He made the world" (Heb. 1:1-2). God speaking to man is thus an historical fact: the Son of God has become man, has spoken, has acted in the fulness of His being and with the consciousness

of His mission and power. We are told this by the same Epistle to the Hebrews in the immediately following lines: "He, being the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance, upholds the universe by God's powerful mandate" (Heb. 1:3). Theology is thus essentially bound up with the facts of Revelation.

The wealth of the divine reality, and its truths were revealed to man in the historical person of Jesus Christ, and entrusted to His Bride, the Church, as an inalienable, intangible, undiminishable, incorruptible treasure. Part of her experience of Christ, the Church has set down in a certain number of historical documents, called Holy Scripture. These documents, or books, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; the truths they contain are therefore guaranteed by the same Holy Spirit. It follows that in Holy Scripture we possess the written word of God, an incomparable evernew fount of Christian faith and life.

While writing these sentences, I recall with grim humor the remark of a good man present at one of our former theological study-meetings: "But why do you ever and always deal with Paul, John and Mark? I should rather hear something taken from a modern author!" That good man failed to see that his religion is a revealed one, and that, surpassing the testimony of even our best modern thinkers, God's word in Holy Writ is an irreplaceable source of faith, of light and of living strength; it is a charter we are bound to follow in our theological investigation and study.

Scripture and Tradition.

We hold then that Holy Scripture forms the basis of our faith; but not Scripture alone. Though written, as we said, under the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Scripture came into being as the first witnessing of the Apostolic Church as well. The Church of the Apostles played a unique rôle in the historical course of Revelation. She stood under the guidance of the Twelve, those pre-eminently authentic witnesses of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and of the mysterious descent of the Holy Spirit. Further, the primitive Church was herself privileged to hear the Lord in person, to listen to His preaching and to watch His works, and she was the first to believe through the power of the Holy Spirit. To her Christ spoke; to her, His Bride, He revealed Himself. She it was who, in the persons of the Apostles and the first disciples, could contemplate the Lord on the Cross, touch the sacred wounds in the risen body, and hear the words of farewell: "And behold, I am with you throughout all time, even until the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28:20).

All this is ample evidence to prove that the Church existed before Holy Scripture. No one can deny that the sacred books owe to the divine inspiration their exceptionally important rôle of being the authentic source of the faith; and yet, we have to admit that they are at the same time, neither more nor less, the divinely inspired expression of the Apostolic Church witnessing to the faith. In them, the primitive Church uttered for the first time her belief; she set down in human language her experience of Christ; she meditated on it all. We discover in Scripture the first beginnings of a true theology, coming as such under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit.

That is why Catholics consider Tradition to be the source of their faith. Tradition, well understood, is not just a number

of unwritten truths still held today by the Church. Tradition is that which is handed on by the entire life of the Church in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit: her liturgical prayer, her sacramental actions, her dogmatic pronouncements in matters of faith and morals by general or provincial councils, her ordinary daily preaching of the faith as proposed always and everywhere by the teaching authority of the bishops united under the primacy of the Roman Pontiff.

Tradition and Scripture cannot be separated from each other. Right at the beginning, Tradition gave rise to the written word; and ever since has in return been nursed and guided by it. To speak of two different sources of faith would be *unfortunate*. The matter is quite simple, really: Tradition and Scripture, keeping true to their respective natures, enrich one another by their mutual relations within the pale of the Church; both are the voice of the Church speaking to us in the name of God.

In both Tradition and Scripture, God speaks to us through the Church, though not in the same manner. Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit; it communicates to us, for instance in the writings of Paul, Peter and John, the very words of God in their most pregnant meaning; while in her Tradition, the Church receives only the "assistance" of the Holy Spirit. The technical term "assistance" means simply that, in her primitive tenets and aspirations, in her authentic life of faith and morals, in her universal unanimity through time and space, and in her solemn papal or conciliar pronouncements, the Church cannot falsify, cannot distort or mutilate the treasure of Christian Revelation.

The grounds for distinguishing between Scripture and Tradition lie deeper than a mere difference of technical terms. Holy Scripture belongs to the period of Revelation proper, to the "fulness of time"; it is the authentic word of God heard in Apostolic days; it remains always part of the historical reality of Revelation, — together of course with the primitive Tradition. From the moment this privileged period was closed, ecclesiastical Tradition has been entrusted with the one task of *keeping intact*

the primordial treasure of Revelation, or, in the words of Paul, "the deposit of faith." It preserves it, however, not as a lifeless thing, a dead letter without spirit, but as a living truth which, remaining ever itself, unfolds, clarifies and enriches itself.

Understood in this sense, the living Church in her living Tradition constitutes a second source of theological thought.

Those are the facts from which all sound religious investigation must start if it cares to stay true to itself and avoid heterodoxy. Heterodoxy is human speculation to which the spirit of the age may lend charm and appeal, but which retains too little of what is absolute, immutable and divine in God's own Word.

Thus the facts are these: first, the fundamental fact of Christ, the Word of God in human gesture and speech; and then, through Christ and the Spirit, the fact of the Church, of her Scripture and Tradition.

Because of all this, the prime attitude of the Christian, desirous of applying himself to the study of God's word, should be one of religious attentiveness and of reverent contemplation, listening not to a man but to God whenever He speaks to us in the Church. To give some instances: Christ has died to redeem us; we needed to be redeemed, because we were born estranged from God and lost: these are facts we read of in Scripture. That Christ is true God and true man, is also a fact proposed to us by Scripture and by the infallible ecumenical council of Chalcedon. It is another fact, defined by the ecumenical councils of Florence and Trent, that there are seven sacraments. Again, it is a fact, attested by the absolutely unerring unanimous Tradition of the Church, that children must be baptized. It is still another fact, held by the Church from time immemorial, though mainly in her liturgy and, therefore, ages before Pius XII defined it on November 1st, 1950, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven.

Let us observe here in passing that the Pope, notwithstanding his supreme teaching authority, prepared the dogma of the

Assumption only after consulting with the faithful scattered throughout the universal Church. No one, not even the Pope, can act by his own authority and apart from the living faith of the entire Church. It is to the whole Church that the intangible treasure of the faith has been given in keeping. Paul wrote to the Galatians who had been led astray by the intrigues of a few fanatical Judaeo-Christians from Jerusalem: "I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you to the grace of Christ, changing to another Gospel; which is not another Gospel, except in this respect that there are some who trouble you, and wish to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a Gospel to you other than that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema! As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone preach a Gospel to you other than that which you have received, let him be anathema!" (Gal. 1: 6-9).

Neither Paul, nor John, nor any ecumenical council, nor bishops in their capacity of teaching body and successors of the Apostles, nor the Pope himself can preach a Gospel other than the one kept alive by the virtue of the Holy Spirit in the everlasting Church.

Virtually, it is all but one voice, one vast chorus of ages and peoples: the voice of the Church which neither may nor can behave otherwise than as the herald of the Father through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In that powerful choir the Father has spoken His transcendent Word; all theology must start from that Word. Whoever overlooks this, whether deliberately or in sheer ignorance, is no theologian, no student of religion, but just a religious dreamer. Whether he be guilty or no matters little; he is a dangerous man because theology (like other domains, such as medicine) deals with questions of life and death. Its concern is God and His sacred Word, Jesus Christ; it is all or nothing.

Theology, an Investigation.

When all the facts, relevant to a chosen religious theme (as for instance, grace) have been ascertained, *the second task* of theological thought begins. With docility, the mind has now to dwell on and to ponder over the facts supplied by faith; it has to seek an insight into them, to try to get a synthetic grasp of their meaning, content, mutual relations and unity.

They have, of course, but one meaning and one only; one that is solidly based on the fundamental structural unity of God's Word. God's Word, manifested both in Revelation and in Redemption, is necessarily one, like Himself. It takes root in the inscrutable depth of the initiative of the One Father; it grows through the creating, redeeming word of the One Son; it is given cohesion and lasting perfection through the silent action of the One Spirit, — all this within the precincts of the One Church, God's temple on earth. God does not act as we do; He does not hesitate, grope His way, with fresh starts every now and then. From His very first Word in creating till the last consummating Word at the end of time, God proceeds in one act, with one thought, one plan of salvation. This unity of the divine operation gives to each one of the many truths and realities of faith its organic place in the whole, and thus also its ultimate meaning. The intent and purpose of theology rests on this basic fact.

Religious study for laymen has the same intent. It should start on its way with all the reverence due to God and His Word; its should persevere with childlike trust in the unity of God's loving action; and so come to realize the ultimate meaning and full import of all that God has done and said in the Church. Obscurities are bound to remain as long as we are on earth. God has not deemed it necessary for our salvation that all questions should be solved at any rate. He has not supplied us with all the answers. However, when reflection goes hand in

hand with prayer, and investigation with faith, the unique magnificence of the divine redemptive action, surrounding us on all sides, cannot fail to dawn upon us by degrees and to warn us of the meaning of life — our own and that of our loved ones. We shall see that we come from God and return to God, in order that, believing, we “may have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10: 10).

Unity and Diversity of the Sciences concerning Man.

We have dwelt at some length on the similarities between theology and the other sciences about man. We now point to *a few basic differences*. We cannot think of seeing them all, nor of treating them in all their aspects. We shall have to restrict ourselves to a few practical remarks, enough to make possible an exchange of views with the sciences that study man from other angles. Such an exchange is not only reasonable but necessary. Man is a living whole; he asks questions about himself, and wants to be accounted for in his totality. He objects to being itemized and dissected “scientifically,” in as much as the conclusions of one science seem to contradict those of another. I am a living being, one reality to myself. I have a right to unity of truth concerning myself, notwithstanding the unavoidable specializations of biochemistry, psychology, sociology and philosophy. This wish grows more and more articulate in the face of the excessive specialization to which the study of man is exposed. The sciences of nature are making rapid progress towards a satisfying, integrated body of knowledge. Why not the same in the science of man? Theology deals with man, man seen from God’s point of view; it cannot neglect the deep-seated need for a unified knowledge.

But let us not simplify matters to excess. Unified knowledge is not to be had merely by scraping together some illassorted conclusions from various sciences. Truth is both one and many-sided, — just as man is. It must be built up organically, with due regard to the many facets and possibilities of expression belonging to the richly varied life which is ours.

Moreover each science possesses its specialized method imposed on it by its own particular subject-matter, and this method traces out the limits within which the given science sets to work. A psychology of man which would claim to swallow up all other knowledge of man would fail to keep true to itself and destroy itself. One is never sufficiently on one's guard against the totalitarian tendency so characteristic of all forms of specialization. Specialists make so much of their own technique and achievements that they soon find themselves unable or unwilling to accept that there remain other aspects beyond the scope of their methods. In this connection, we would call attention to a great difference existing between the experimental sciences and philosophy. The former increase the number and precision of their tests in view of securing a more comprehensive understanding of their respective chosen portion of human experience; whilst philosophy makes straight for what is absolute in our being. Now, theology may be compared to the natural sciences in so far as it endeavors to describe accurately the data bearing on salvation and contained in Revelation; but theology is more akin to philosophy as regards its nature and degree of certitude: it seeks to reach what is absolute and eternal in the divine plan concerning us in Christ and the Spirit.

We do not have the time or the occasion to go into the problem of the oneness of human thought taken as a whole, or to consider it in its full range and complexity. Nor is it necessary. But, one important point needs singling out here: the correct usage (and, therefore, the correct understanding) of the words at our disposal for an exchange of views with the other sciences about man.

The Correct Usage of Words.

It is surprising to notice how much human thinking is dependent on the spoken or written word, on vocabulary and grammar. Some philosophical lines of thought cannot thrive in certain countries because the literary humus, i.e., the idiom of the people, seems unfit for such speculation.

Be that as it may, man cannot think accurately without the help of a precise terminology. Every language is limited in its vocabulary; so much so that one and the same word may possess widely different meanings, arising from very unexpected causes. To take one example: the word "tank" signifies, of course, a receptacle of plate iron for the use of storing liquids; but it may also mean "a type of armoured car running on caterpillar wheels, equipped with a crew and guns, for attacking an enemy in difficult country." The latter meaning happens to have been introduced by the British in December 1915 for the purpose of secrecy during manufacture.

On the ground of language, theology faces a rather hopeless task. Like any other science, it borrows its words where it can, from everyday life, or from the other sciences, especially philosophy. These words strike their most secret roots in the primitive subsoil of a definite culture and language; worse still, however spiritualized they may have grown to be by now, they are words belonging to earth. Unavoidably, they are influenced by the historical development that every nation and linguistic region must undergo. Rationalism is badly mistaken when it asserts that words and their connotations are completely independent of the evolutionary process of the culture to which they belong. Few things are as interesting as the history of a single word. And nothing more delicate. Words and their meaning may be compared to the modulation of a voice: one can tell the primary tone from the overtones or harmonics to which the voice owes its richness, its warmth and charm.

Words possess a basic meaning which evolve appreciably in the course of time. They are the products of a particular cultural milieu with its own individual temperament and with its own peculiar set of problems in a general human climate. In such circumstances, words cannot help adding to their original basic sense numerous varying resonances not always recorded within the covers of a dictionary. Much research and "esprit de finesse" are needed to re-awaken the rich scale of tones a word has acquired through the centuries. To take an example: it is now a matter of common knowledge that the word "democracy" means different things for men in the United States, England, the Benelux countries, France or the Marxist regions. Among Asians and Africans, its meaning is often unsuspected. Man does not think with his reason only; he thinks with the background of his whole being, his time and race. To want to to stand by reason exclusively would be sheer, unrealistic and inhuman illusion. Actual experience bears out the truth of Shakespeare's sceptical lines: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet!" Nothing is as fleeting and illusive as a word.

And it is with such words that theology must endeavour to speak to man of the absolute, the unchangeable, the eternal: of God and His work of Salvation.

Words, in their mould of sound and script, must do duty for symbols not of human experience and knowledge, but of the transcendent divine truth. They have to translate for us not what *we* think, say or experience, but *what God Himself says and thinks of us*. No man in his senses would have ventured to take such inadequate material to express God's message, if God Himself had not set us the example in Holy Scripture, and especially in His Son. The Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, did not hesitate to speak to mankind about His Father, about His own Person and about the divine plan, in the language of uncultured Galilean fishermen and peasants. The Church does now what the Son of God did in Palestine. She is

all the more justified in doing so in matters for which she comes under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In theology, words do not entirely escape their human fate. Our times have made the discovery that even theology has a history. To illustrate this point, let us follow one or two case histories. It is clear now that the term "revelation," apart from its primary meaning derived from Scripture, connoted in the Middle-Ages "assonances" which it no longer possesses today. To the medieval mind, "revelation" raised spontaneously the question of private revelations: what was their nature and what were the obligations they entailed? Today, after the "Aufklärung" with its inquiry into the natural revelation of God in creation, and after the Vatican council, we understand "revelation" to mean almost exclusively the eternal truths which God manifested, not through creation but supernaturally. Some theological textbooks may still have a word to say on the subject of private revelations; they do so, however, out of a belated fidelity to the old scholastic way of proceeding. Modern trends have changed; spontaneous reactions are different.

The same remarks apply to the term "faith," in the sense of content of faith and dogma. Until, and even during the council of Trent, the term had a much broader meaning. Then it did not spontaneously suggest truths immediately revealed by God and proposed as such by the Church, — as it has since the seventeenth century and, more definitely, since the Vatican council. The problem presented itself rather differently. In the framework of former scholastic theology, the word "faith" pointed above all to the criteriological properties of our supernatural knowledge. Faith is both obscure and certain. In the eyes of the medieval theologian, its obscurity linked it with "opinion," whilst its absolute certainty allied it with "scientia" or deductive knowledge. It seemed also to belong to the moral plane of obedience to the Church. "Faith," consequently, stood for whatever the Church could infallibly propose and impose as necessary means towards eternal salvation; thus it also stood

for the truths which could be deduced with logical certitude from the truths of faith; it stood even for the universal ecclesiastical laws. These last two we would no longer call "truths of faith." Things have not changed objectively; but vocabulary and psychological outlook have taken on a different perspective.

All this explains why great efforts are being made today to recover the original and exact meaning of the words used in Scripture. Patient research has resulted in the production of detailed dictionaries for both the Old and the New Testaments. What is more, it has awakened the need to trying to recapture the philosophy (or mentality) hidden in the vocabulary. We have come to realize more clearly than ever the obvious principle of the *Imitation*: "Omnis Scriptura debet legi eo spiritu quo scripta est," "texts of Scripture must be read *in the spirit* in which they have been written." For a whole century, exegetes have had to do battle against the rationalistic bias of theologians in order to reconquer what is theirs by right. We are perhaps not yet technically equipped for a critical study of ancient conciliary texts; but everything points to the evident necessity of it. As the French proverb has it: "Donnez-moi la parole de quelqu'un, et je le fais pendre." Taken out of the context, any word can be forced to fit any desired sense; deftly handled, the words of Scripture itself can be twisted into rank heresy.

It would be naive to suggest that this view of human thinking smacks of modernism. True modernism sinks all certitude concerning God in the shifting sands of human search and speech, stops there and looks no further. All thought, all spoken or written word is fatally caught in the perpetual flux of an ever-changing varying stream of human history.

Even from a purely human standpoint, this view is false. Though we speak in different tongues and think in different climates, we are nonetheless able to understand each other through the ages and everywhere; clear proof that we speak of the same common experiences, the same basic truths and realities of life, though in different words and perspectives.

The modernist view is in a worse state still when we consider the Church. When Christ promised her His Spirit, He did so with the purpose of ensuring that the living, growing truths entrusted to her develop in perfect fidelity to themselves. And here an important point should be made. The infallibility, with which Christ has endowed His Church, includes the right of attaching a definite truth to a definite word. It is quite possible that, as Karl Barth and others assert, the word (and the notion) "person" has evolved so much that in its modern usage it no longer expresses aptly the mystery of three Persons in one God. However, the Church did choose the word "person" to designate each one of the three centres of divine life in the Trinity. She uses it in her councils, her liturgy and her catechism. As a society of men, she is entitled like any other human society to select, or to coin if need be, those words which seem to her best fit to express her authentic teaching. Furthermore, the Church is also a divine institution, thus enjoying an enhanced right to connect the Trinitarian truth with a definite terminology. In case the men of today — those, at least, who belong to some philosophical or phenomenological school — stand in danger of misunderstanding one or other term, it would be the part of the theologians to explain it to them and to enlighten them concerning the true mind of the Church. All things considered, there is not the slightest reason for changing the term; so many words in our western vocabulary possess different meanings. Besides, the Church's fidelity to ancient traditional expressions, in spite of linguistic evolution, has a higher significance: it underlines the intangible nature of her inheritance, the faith. Nothing prevents her from meditating more deeply on the riches of the mystery contained in the formulas consecrated by tradition. But to meditate on the truths of faith does not mean to go back on and rectify earlier thought. All the Church does is to deepen her grasp of it, and to declare more explicitly what she has always been aware of, though with less precision perhaps, in the past.

That is the way the Church guards the treasure she inherited, the deposit of faith; but she may not allow it to mummify.

Faith remains an ever living truth — living, on condition only that it does not renounce itself. Fidelity to the primordial data of Revelation, combined with a growing understanding of “what is the breadth and length and height and depth” of the divine mysteries: that is the exclusive privilege of the Church as a divine-human society. Unless she was endowed with Christ’s own teaching power and with the abiding assistance of the Spirit, the Church, like any other human society, would be liable to corrupt and deform her initial inspiration and percept, — a process which Toynbee has described in a masterly way.

It is fitting, then, to observe and to stress how fortunate it is for ecclesiastical language to be independent of evolutionary changes in culture, — though it stays within the flux of time. Like a living organism, the Church takes into account the varying developments of language and schools of thought; but she keeps faithful to herself and to her Lord.

Need we repeat now that this way of conceiving evolution differs radically from modernism? Modernism in essence consists in the persuasion that religious expression — and that includes dogma — can be nothing but an indefinitely changing representation of both the momentary religious experiences and the collective religious perceptions at a given point of history. It amounts to pure relativism, therefore, — the subtle temptation of our age.

From what precedes, there follows the evident conclusion that, in our meetings for religious study, we may not forget the exact meaning of our words. Strict observance of this obligation increases when we enter into discussion with educated persons, men of science let us say, who obviously dispose of an accurately defined vocabulary of their own.

To take an example with bearing on the subject-matter of this book, it seems impossible to speak of grace without mentioning sin; for grace brings with it deliverance from and remission of sin. Now, the word “sin” occurs in connection with other matters not belonging to theology. To a psychologist,

"sin" stands for a vague sense of guilt arising from either an inborn or an acquired anxiety-complex. It indicates a depressing tension between different psychic tendencies, drives and repressions which have not been adequately integrated into an interior equilibrium. Frequently, neither morality nor personal responsibility are involved. Rather the other way round: many psychologists tend to emphasize its impersonal and non-voluntary aspects. Anxiety can grow into a cancer causing disorderly anomaly, disquiet and dissatisfaction; it may turn into an oppressive anxiety-fixation; and yet never reach the personal depth where religious sin takes root.

The philosopher, on his side, thinks of "sin" along other lines. To him, "sin" means infidelity to self, a want of existential authenticity in respect of self, a deliberate strengthening of a fundamental urge in nature, eventually also a freely accepted offense against the absolute rule of all morality, or, finally and at best, a preference given to self away from or against the absolute source of all being and action.

For the theologian, there can be no question of "sin" except at the spiritual level where the free "commitment to life" takes place; and in this, the theologian is at one with the philosopher. But *seen from the point of view of Revelation*, "sin" is a great deal more than that: it is a revolt against the living God. More explicitly, it is self-sufficiency turning away, in proud self-love, from God's all-enveloping love; it is a sacriligious refusal to be and to live, with Christ, as child of the Father.

It has been rightly remarked that the depth and the godlessness of sin, as mentioned by Revelation, can be fathomed only in the measure one progresses in the knowledge and love of God. That is why the saints and the mystics are the only ones to realize keenly the heinousness of sin, — much to the discomfiture of our own hard-heartedness and earth-bound dispositions. Sin, in the meaning it has in Revelation, is to be measured from God's point of view, i. e., from that of the divine wrath and abhorrence so starkly manifested by the sacrifice

of the Cross. Christ died on the Cross to let us "sense," in a human tangible manner, how utterly the All-Pure and the All-Holy condemns sin. The Cross stands as the vivid symbol and disclosure of both God's wrath and God's love.

To express three rather divergent groups of facts, we dispose of only one word: "sin." When a psychologist, a philosopher and a theologian meet to discuss the subject of sin, they land in the most senseless misunderstandings as soon as they forget that each one speaks of something different. Their purposes, too, are divergent. The psychologist practices psychiatry when he does his utmost to relieve the sense of guilt in view of building up the patient's psychic equilibrium. One can understand that his speciality and the personal experience he has of a morbid religiosity in some of his clients may cause him to ignore the teaching of the Church about sin, or that he declares offhand the Christian notion of sin a menace to psychic health. We need not enter into this here.

The philosopher, looking at sin from a speculative point of view and taking his stand on general humanistic principles, may often see in it no more than the baneful, dark side of freewill, the risk besetting all human existence. The theologian, on his side, bases himself on Revelation to stress the need of a sense of sin which, to the Christian mind, differs in kind from psychic anxiety. All the saints, outside periods of spiritual trial, have found great peace and strength in the sense of sin. A correct estimate of sin belongs to the essence of a genuine Christian faith.

The difficulty grows when we realize that the three, qualitatively different realities meet together in the living unit of the same individual man, and mutually influence each other. On this score, the three approaches to the notion of sin differ among themselves and are, nevertheless, related to each other. The philosopher concerns himself with the analysis of the structure of man's nature as such, and of the capacity to sin as such. Both structure and capacity work themselves out, in

their respective ways, in the fact of personal religious sin. And because religious sin is essentially a spiritual lie, it reacts generally on the psychic self in the form of a remorseful sense of guilt. In the case of a psychologically unbalanced individual, or even in the case of a man who is normal but unwilling to rid himself of his sin, remorse may sometimes spread like a leprosy and eventually impair psychic health. In any event, there exists a relation between the psychic sense of guilt and real sin against God.

Oratorical preachers rarely fail to make an impression when they graphically enlarge on the death of a sinner. Led by a deep-seated sensibility, priests and faithful tend to forecast agonizing despair at the deathbed of any great sinner. Events do not always turn out as anticipated. The French writer, Bernanos, in his profound drama "Dialogue des Carmélites," has put on the stage the harrowing agony of the saintly prioress Mother Henriette du Nom de Jésus. If we want something more striking: did the All-Holy not lie prostrate in the Garden of Olives, crushed by anguish and mental torture? On the other hand, we are not unaware that many men, after an apparently evil life, have met with a peaceful end. Psychic anxiety does not necessarily go together with spiritual wickedness and guilt. The nature of the sickness, from which the patients suffer, may cause painful agony in some and euphoric hope in others, till the final end.

But let no one misunderstand me. It is not at all my intention to maintain that sinners, especially at the last moment, are generally free from remorse. All I want to suggest is that sin and anguish, peace and innocence are not invariably linked together in actual life. Final impenitence and obdurate revolt against God may very well leave something like Satanic serenity on the face of a dead man.

What has been said concerning the word and the notion of "sin" holds good in connection with other terms and notions. For instance: we should know what we are talking about when

we speak of "grace," particularly of the aspect of grace which we experience i. e., interior peace of soul. To be mentally at peace with oneself means nothing more to the psychologist than an integrated equilibrium of all the psychic powers working in healthy harmonious unison. To the philosopher, mental peace stands for the conscious glow of well-being which a man experiences when he commits himself to his concrete actual task in life with complete sincerity and truth. The Christian, on his side, sees in peace of mind the inner realization of God's love for him, a peace which the Lord alone can give. Among the saints, some have lived, for a time at least, in the earthly paradise of a rarely achieved balance between the natural and the supernatural powers; others have carried the treasure of an ineffable mystical peace in the midst of an anxious spiritual turmoil, amounting at times to mental imbalance.

The powers which rule our life run their course along parallel lines, each one according to its own laws. Normally, though, they show a marked tendency to combine into a mutually attuned rhythm of development. Of this we find a remarkable illustration in the life of Theresa of Avila. The Protestant Walter Nigg, a well-known church historian, devotes some moving pages of his book "Great Saints" to the development of Theresa's harmonious growth in holiness. She spent 20 years in the convent of the Incarnation at Avila, in the faithful observance of the approved rules and customs of that otherwise rather wordly cloister. Already then she was favored with the higher mystical states, and at the same time disturbingly rent within herself, to the verge of manifesting the strangest symptoms of sickness and catalepsy. It is foolhardy to try to unravel the secret working of grace in the saints. Nevertheless, Walter Nigg seems justified when saying that, at bottom, the cause of Theresa's illnesses lay in the deep-set conflict she experienced between her vocation to sanctity and the pull of some bourgeois, or even worldly, ways of life around her. No sooner did she surrender to the call of grace, in the spirit of the reformed Carmel, than another woman stands revealed in her, the greatest woman of her age. From

then on, she showed herself endowed with a firmness of character, a harmony of life, a quiet humor and an unrivalled spirit of enterprise the like of which we quite fail to detect under the traits of her former semi-hysterical temperament. It is safe to suppose that in Theresa the complete victory of grace favored appreciably the robust psychological integration which we admire in the saint. Her irresistible feminine charm, her refined yet childlike joy in life, her strength of character and power of organization, her stout and purposeful readiness to show fight for the good cause: all these not only point to a heart totally reborn by grace, but also to a human nature very nearly Edenic in its integrity.

Conclusion.

And so we reach the end of the first part. We may sum up and conclude. If, in our studies, we want to hear what theology teaches, we shall have to take for granted, with becoming respect, the laws which rule it from within. We shall have to use words in the sense determined by theology and not by other sciences or branches of human knowledge. In case other sciences, also engaged in the study of man, make use of the same words, though with different connotations, we shall respect the notional difference and faithfully bear it in mind. Any other way of discussing religious problems produces nothing but confusion and stirs up endless difficulties that are absolutely uncalled for. Why jeopardize an earnest study of the faith by blurring the issues with a hopeless jumble of words and notions?

We shall inquire into the faith and *take for basis the rock bottom facts of divine revelation*. The words we shall use cover

realities not of this earth. They are but clumsy human means to designate the eternal designs which God Himself has deigned to reveal in and through the Church, Scripture and Tradition, but chiefly through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not intend to proceed recklessly in the use of our words and definitions. And this for two reasons: firstly, because the realities they cover are organically interconnected in the unity of human experience; secondly, because in the complexity of life, those realities develop on their respective levels, each faithful to its particular pattern of laws and to its own individual purpose.

Part II **What Is Grace?**

When visiting an important museum, it is advisable to begin with a first exploratory look through the principal halls. The theology of grace is a world by itself; what we have said in the first part of this book will help us to find our way about in it. In order to set the problem in its proper light from the start, we shall avail ourselves of a parable. The rich symbolism of parables, tales or examples have the advantage of enlightening the mind to a surprising degree on one or other of God's secret dealings with man. Christ Himself had recourse to parables to teach the ineffable, to communicate to His hearers what needs remain hidden. Parables respect mysteries and speak to the whole man.

A Parable.

Once upon a time, there was a young girl, an orphan, who grew up in coarse surroundings. Her foster parents were hard and rough, and had never wanted her. Never as a baby or as a growing child had she known the subtle intimacy of a true home. She had never been loved.

And then she grew into a young woman. Daily encounter with disparagement, egotism and brutality hardened her heart. All she knew was self-defense, daily surly bickering to make sure of a minimum of security and right. To the best of her knowledge, it had always been so in the past, and it would remain so in the future: biting in order not to be bitten, — the law of the jungle. She had no faith in man; she had not even faith in herself.

Her whole appearance betrayed the solitude in which the soul of her youth was living. She toiled and moiled, dressed

in cheap graceless attire. Her one resource to escape from hopeless emptiness was rough and rowdy amusement. Selfish, suspicious and uncouth, with bitterness distorting her mouth, she was aware that she had no beauty and that what men wanted was her body for a few lustful moments.

There lived in the same city a young man, hale and strong. His sunny youth, spent in the midst of loving parents, brothers and sisters, shone in his gaze and sang in his voice. His step and speech were assured and firm, as is the case with those who have found peace. He was a good man.

One bright morning in spring, the miracle happened. The young man met the girl, by chance. Moved in his innermost self, his heart went out to her. With the eyes of love, he saw right through and beyond her shabby vulgarity. He looked out for her; he spoke to her with the simplicity of a conquered heart. But she, at first, laughed in his face, addressed him in crude unmannered language. She thought he was ridiculous.

Tact, however, patience and respect found their way at last to a remnant of yearning which lay still unwithered in the depth of the girl's being. For the first time in her life, *she was appreciated for her own sake*, — the greatest need of human nature. Yet, *the beauty he discovered in her did not come from her but from his love*.

Love has been a creative power since the beginning of the world. The young man's deference and appreciation stirred up in her a nascent self-reliance, a foretaste of peace and quiet, of inner self-assurance. And timidly, gropingly, the young woman awakened to first love. She shyly began taking care of her appearance, gaudily still and without elegance. His tenderness and his example refined her taste. Beauty came to her with the first smile.

Soon they became absorbed in each other. They steadily drew together in a selfless exchange of pure mutual love. What had happened really? Or better: what had come into being? That girl had been granted a great *favor*, a matchless present, a gift she did not deserve: the favor of love.

After the long barren winter of her youth, a seed had been sown in her innermost self; it was ready to spring into life. Though still very much herself, she was already another person. Welling up from unsuspected regions within her, she experienced a soothing security; she grew steadily in strength and depth, in proportion as her formerly cherished convictions were pulled up by the roots. It was like a painful dying. All the distrust, hatred and vindictiveness she had so far nursed in herself, whatever she had clung to with the despair of a drowning person: all that she had now to let go; she had to resign herself to the sensation of being stripped bare, bereaved of all. A harrowing agony, indeed; but one of which life is born.

Like a ship tossed on the waves and driven from her course, the girl tried another tack; she steered to the unknown: *the leap of faith in another*. The aggressive self-assertiveness, the armor in which she had shielded herself so far, was torn off her. She attempted *the leap of hope in another* who would, in the future, stand surety for her. Meanwhile, a novel, unsuspected marvel happened: she felt enriched by her new state of bereavement, secure and anchored in her surrender. Faith and hope ripened into *real love*, the final leap indispensable to any one who wants both to lose himself and to find himself in another. The girl had lost everything she had; but what she lost, she recovered superabundantly. She ceased putting her trust in appearances and now saw deeper in things. She discovered the beauty of her surrounding world: the setting sun, the violet in the shade, the light in the eyes of the child, the laughter in a voice. She saw everything through the eyes of the beloved. She became another being altogether; for the first time, she was her true self. Her injured youth lived on in her; but it now began to develop along the line of generosity and disinterested care of others, — in a wealth of gratitude.

A beautiful tale, indeed. The one thing in it which leaves us somewhat sceptical is whether there ever was a young man powerful enough to work such a miracle. We read of the custom in honor among the conquistadores that when the latter were

caught in a storm at sea, they vowed marriage with the first penniless girl God would put on their path after a safe return home, with the proviso, naturally, that the girl be sound of limb and morals. Whatever view one takes of the parable or of the conquistadores's custom, it is sure that only a very pure and powerful love can change bitterness and hatred into a return of love. No mere man, however, can achieve even that much; for wickedness is rooted more deeply in our nature than we dare suspect. That is why there had to appear a Man without sin; a Man possessing God's own heart. And when He came, the tale became reality.

God's Own Parable.

Holy Writ speaks of that Man. Already in the Old Testament, Yahweh tells the Jews: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have written thee in the palm of my hands, thy walls are always before my mind" (Is. 49: 15-16).

The parable of a moment ago, we did not invent. It is told in more gripping language by Ezechiel. The prophet speaks, in chapter sixteen, of the unique undying love of God for the faithless city, Jerusalem, which prefigured the whole of mankind and the Church.

"So saith the Lord God to Jerusalem! The land of thy origin and birth is Chanaan; thy father was an Amorrhite, and thy mother a Cethite" (pagan lands, turned away from God). "In this manner wast thou born, in the day of thy nativity, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed clean with

water, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling clothes. No eye had pity on thee to do any of these things, out of compassion to thee; but thou wast cast out upon the open field, because no one thought thy life worth while.

"I, then, passed by thee and saw thee sprawling in thy blood; and I said to thee when thou wast in they blood: Live. I bathed thee in water and washed the blood off thee, and anointed thee with oil; I made thee look as fresh as the flower of the field. And thou didst increase and grow great, and advancedst, and camest to woman's ornament: thy breasts were fashioned and thy hair grew; and yet thou wast naked and full of confusion.

"And again I passed by thee and saw that the time of love had come to thee. I spread my garment over thee and covered thy ignominy. And I swore to thee and I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God; and thou becamest mine. And I clothed thee with embroidery and shod thee with violet colored shoes; and I girded thee about with fine linen, and clothed thee with garments of silk. And I decked thee also with ornaments and put bracelets on thy hands, and a chain about thy neck... Thou wast made exceeding beautiful and wast advanced to be a queen. And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect through the luster I put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

"But trusting in thy beauty, thou playedst the harlot because of thy renown; and thou hast prostituted thyself to every passerby to be his". Here the sacred author describes the "prostitution" of Jerusalem. "Thou didst also built thee a brothel... Thou hast made thy beauty to be abominable; and thou hast prostituted thyself to every one that passed by, and hast multiplied thy fornications." These "fornications" will bring Jerusalem to commit the most unnatural deeds. "Adulterous woman, thou hast brought strangers in the place of thy husband. Gifts are given to all harlots; but thou hast given hire to all thy lovers, and thou hast given them gifts to come to thee from every side to commit fornication with thee" (Ez. 16: 3-33).

The significance of this gripping chapter, describing the eternal drama between God and man, will come home to us better when we realize that the term "prostitution," used by the prophets especially in connection with the Covenant, means the sin of idolatry. To commit "fornication" is to betray the Covenant, to renounce and forsake Yahweh as the one true God, to reject His eternal love, and to believe in false deities. As most cults, practised by Israel's neighboring peoples, were mixed with religious prostitution and human sacrifice, the term "fornication" was a telling one to the Jewish mind. In Ezechiel's text, the literal and figurative senses overlap and mix; thus: the casting away of children, the offering to the deities, the various allusions to the lewd practices among the people....

Israel's sin is more grievous than those of Sodom and Samaria. God will punish Jerusalem more than any other nation. In the punishment, however, lies also forgiveness; for God remains ever faithful to His first love. It is in this way that we should read and understand the conclusion of the chapter. "Thus saith the Lord God: I will deal with thee, as thou hast despised the oath in breaking the Covenant; and I will remember my Covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish with thee an everlasting Covenant. And thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thy elder and thy younger, and I will give them to thee for daughters, but not by of thy Covenant." In this way, Jerusalem, capital of God's New People, receives the promise that it will be given other nations for daughters; namely the pagans who live far removed from God and until now have had no share in the divine promises. "I will establish my Covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and mayest no more open thy mouth because of thy confusion, *when I shall be pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.*"

The story became actual truth on the eve of the Passion, when the Man, possessed of God's own heart, told His disciples in the cenacle: "Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood in the

New Covenant, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Mt. 26: 27-28).

The Old Testament stresses two of Yahweh's attributes, mercy and fidelity, or, as the Vulgate calls them less accurately "grace and truth." "All the ways of Yahweh are mercy and fidelity to them that seek after His Covenant and law" (Ps. 24: 10). In Psalm 135, the chorus keeps repeating: "Praise ye the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endureth for ever." We take it, then, that divine mercy and fidelity characterize the message of the Old Testament. And this makes us realize better the force of St. John's terse, solemn declaration in the opening chapter of his Gospel: "Of His fulness we have all received, one grace after another. True, the law was given through Moses, but mercy and fidelity came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1: 16-17). Whatever the prophets had sung concerning God's "mercy and fidelity" became a reality in the New Testament. No longer is there question of parables, but of sober actual fact; God came down in Person to us and became man. "The Word was made flesh (i. e., plain, weak men as we are) and dwelt among us (as did Yahweh of old, with His people in the desert, or in the holy of holies, on Mount Sion), and we saw His glory (i. e., His divine presence, as on Mount Tabor, or after the Resurrection), the glory belonging to the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (i. e., full of mercy and fidelity)" (Jn. 1: 14).

Man finds it hard to believe in love, especially in a love which forgives and perseveres in the face of betrayal and infidelity. That is why He, who is the incarnate "grace and truth" of the Father, "the radiance of God's glory and the very image of His being" (Heb. 1: 3), will speak so insistently of God's love for us. Luke has preserved three parables emphasizing the reality we dare not easily accept, the fact that God loves us with unceasing fidelity. Those are the parables of the lost sheep, of the lost silver piece and of the prodigal son (Lk. 15: 3-32).

"And He said: 'A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me.'" To the Jews, the promised land was their

inheritance, that which they had received as heritage from God Himself. "And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far land." Thus not the promised land, but the country of the heathens that lay outside God's Covenant. "And there he wasted his substance, living riotously." Saying this, Our Lord refers in delicate terms to the graphic description of the prophet Ezechiel, the sin of "prostitution" which, in its deeper meaning, signifies apostasy and revolt against God.

"And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine." Thanks to the latter discreet detail, the Apostles (who were Jews) and the simple people of Galilee were sufficiently given to understand into what state of degradation the young man had sunk; to a Jew, swine were unclean animals which he could not tend without denying himself. "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him."

"And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger! I will arise and will go to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven (i. e., against God) and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me one of thy hired servants. Rising up, he came to his father."

"And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand (sign of a full reinstatement into his former rank), and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found. And they began to be merry."

This Gospel passage is a favorite one with poets and preachers; justly so. But they usually fail to call attention to what follows in the sacred text. Yet, it is what follows that brings out the difficulty man experiences to acknowledge and accept God's love. Who among our good Catholics, or for that matter among priests and religious, rejoices when hearing that a public sinner has been reconciled with God on his deathbed? Who, in his heart, shares the joy which fills the heart of the heavenly Father? Last minute conversions are commented upon in sarcastic, inconsiderate terms. Such talk seems to betray a hidden regret that, unlike the deceased man, one has not dared to have one's fling on earth, for fear of missing a safe arrival in the next world.

The elder brother of the prodigal son showed spite because of the great feast with which the home-coming of the younger brother was celebrated. "And he was angry and would not go in. His father, therefore, coming out began to entreat him. And he answering said to his father: Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment; and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends; but as soon as this thy son is come, who has devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed the fatted calf. But he said to him: Son, *thou art always with me, and all I have is thine*. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found" (Lk. 15: 11-32).

We cannot claim to be Christians *unless we believe in God's love*. "We have seen and do testify that the Father hath sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. (For thus) *we have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us*. God is charity; and he who abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him"... St. John concludes with the words which, according to St. Augustine, sum up the secret of grace: "Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us" (1 Jn. 4: 14-19).

The theology of grace is in the main the theology of God's love for us and of the love which God's first love has caused in us. "Grace" is the English word for the Latin "gratia." Now, "gratia" has acquired many secondary meanings both in the technical language of the theologians and in the usage of the Church and the great Councils; but its prime, fundamental, Christian meaning comes from Scripture. The Latin Vulgate used "gratia" to translate the Greek word "charis." All the sacred authors of the New Testament, Paul in particular, have borrowed from the Septuagint the term "charis" that renders several Hebrew words conveying meanings reduceable to three main ideas: condescending love, conciliatory compassion and fidelity. The basic sense of Christian "grace," whatever its later and further technical or non-scholastic connotations, should always remind us *that God first loved us*. Let that be its fundamental chord.

"Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is charity. By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him. In this is charity: not as though we had loved God (by our power and means), but because He first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4: 7-10).

The Covenant of Grace.

The first part of this book has shown us that all deeper study of the faith must begin with an attitude of attention to what God tells us in the Church, in Holy Scripture and in Tradition. We take for granted that our first parable has caused in us the required attentive attitude and has prepared us to lend an ear to God's own stories concerning Himself.

Here we need do no more than recall to mind the leading ideas of Scripture, to which the preceding pages serve as introduction.

The Old Testament is but one long hymn of praise to the love which God showed to His chosen people of Israel. Whenever it describes the divine predilection, the central theme is always the Covenant which God freely entered upon with His people. Round this central theme, many others group themselves and swell into a powerful polyphony; as, for instance: God's fidelity and compassion, His patience and forbearance, His love and mercy. God is celebrated, in turn, as the bridegroom dealing with a fickle and faithless bride, as the shepherd, as the vine-dresser planting and tending his vineyard, as the physician, or the father and king.

Special emphasis is placed on the fact that the divine favor is totally *undeserved*. What need had God of Israel? "Not because you surpass all nations in number, is the Lord joined unto you and hath chosen you, for you are the fewest of any people; but because the Lord hath loved you and hath kept His oath" ... (Deut. 7: 7). I have loved Israel "because I am the Lord!" (Os. 2: 18), "because I am God and not man, the holy one in your midst" (Os. 11: 1). "It is not because of you ... but for my holy name's sake" (Ez. 36: 22). With good reason the Psalmist exclaims: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to thy name give glory. For thy mercy and for thy truth's sake, lest the Gentiles should say: Where is their God" (Ps. 113: 1-2).

God Himself, His sanctity is the motive of His love. The Old Testament never ceases underlining the absolute gratuitousness of the divine gift. Whilst Israel keeps forfeiting the Lord's love by its repeated revolts, infidelities and idolatry, God remains true to His Covenant; His word remains for ever: "He is God and not a man."

In pre-Christian times, the outstanding fact connected with man's salvation was precisely the Covenant God had concluded

with an insignificant nation, — prelude and preparation of the everlasting Covenant made in His Son. All the other facts stand grouped around it. Before all else, creation clearly signifies that everything comes from God as a pure gift of love. Then, all the memorable events which we learned in the Bible history of our schooldays, the exact bearing of which lay in great part beyond our youthful understanding. Among these events, we may mark out: the solemn divine promises made to the patriarchs, the calling of Abraham, Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt as an exceptional testimony of God's enduring love, the special Providence watching over the Jewish people during the reign of the kings and the period of the prophets. Israel was not only too small and too insignificant a nation to warrant the slightest claim to a marked predilection, but its increasingly great infidelity and apostasy, its impenitence and obduracy caused it to forfeit all appearance of a claim to it. That is why the main mission of the prophets consisted in proclaiming God's absolute fidelity to His promises, the excellence of His love. They threaten that if Israel keeps failing in its allegiance, God will reserve to Himself a "remnant," and transfer His predilection to the poor and the contemptible; He will turn to other nations and make those "poor of Yahweh" henceforth the object of His election. It is not God who abandoned man, but man who abandoned God.

All that God wanted to be to Israel is but a distant foreshadowing of what He actually is to "His new people," to the "poor of Yahweh," to the Church. "For God so loved the world that He hath given His Only Begotten Son" (Jn. 3: 16). Herein lies that other element of salvation with which the Christian epoch opened. The unique love of the Father was made manifest to us in Jesus Christ, not so much in spoken words as in deeds: the small, discreet, daily marvels narrated in the Gospels, but above all, the final consummation of the Cross.

The crowning act of the Cross has become to our faith fully intelligible as a historical reality because of what immediately

followed it. Two facts powerfully impressed the nascent and shattered Christian community: first, Christ's Resurrection and Ascension; second, the coming of the Holy Spirit, together with the wonders of spiritual fulfilment and enthusiasm which in the beginning of the primitive Church accompanied this descent and made it visible and tangible.

These facts and realities have not failed to throw light even on the history of the Jewish people, God's chosen race. Whatever happened to Israel was intended by God as a portent, a preparation and a foreshadowing of the central fact of all history, that is the fact that God Himself, in the Person of His eternal Word, "was made flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1: 14), so that we, in our turn, might (in the bold language of the Greek Fathers) become gods, i. e., filled with divine and filial life. St. John pointed this out when he disclosed the higher meaning of Caiphas' prophesy: "Do you not realize that it is good for you that one man should die for the people and not let the whole nation perish?" (Jn. 11: 50). Caiphas had addressed those words to the Sanhedrin; but John is prompt to reveal the more hidden sense God meant them to convey: "Now, he did not say that of himself, but being the high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not only for the nation, but *to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed*" (Jn. 11: 52).

The Apostle is more explicit still in his epistle: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth not us, because it knew Him not. Dearly beloved, *we are now the sons of God*; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be (i. e., what it means to be sons of God has not yet been made known). We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3: 1-2).

These facts initiate us still further into the redeeming truths of our faith, — dogmas and articles of faith so frowned upon today in some circles. We are not here presented with abstract postulates, belonging to some sort of pious geometry, with axioms fettering creative thought in chains of arid speculation. It is true that faith restrains thought within certain limits; but like all original truth, it both restrains and stimulates *through the facts*. These facts, voices of God's perennial youth, deliver their enduring message not so much to discursive speculative reason as to the whole man. They lend fertility to thought by leading progressively to fresh, richer and deeper realizations. At the same time, they demand an unambiguous acceptance of their truth, radiance of divine actuality. Take the Creed for instance, the summary of Catholic belief: starting with creation, it proceeds like a triumphal march of divine deeds which, from creation till life everlasting, God has done for His people, His Church in general and each one of her members in particular. Thanks to these salvific facts, we are given to understand of what manner it is salvific or in what manner God grants us His grace.

The mystery of grace is the mystery of the way God's love acts with us and for us. Considered as mere creatures, we stand in dire poverty *outside* the pale of the divine almighty splendor. We may call that our creaturely *isolation from God*. Original sin, which our own personal sins actualize still further in life, relegates us not only outside God's glory, but *under God's wrath*. Our creaturely condition is not merely destitute, but stained and injured. As we are all born in the state of original sin, we come on earth *in the state of perdition*.

Let us well understand this. Original sin in us is no personal actual sin of ours; this precision is necessary to avoid confused notions. Original sin *is a state* of estrangement from God, and

of perdition, affecting before God the whole of mankind jointly. God never sees us as isolated individuals, but as sharing a responsibility *in common*. We all fell away from the love of God into perdition, in and with the whole of mankind.

Shakespeare exclaims in "Measure for measure" (act II, sc. 2):

.....But man, proud man,
Dress'd in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured —
His glassy essence, — like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep;...

This is not mere literature, poetic flight of fancy; it is profound truth. The brutalizing experiences of our age have fortunately freed us from a naive optimism and from a smug bourgeois belief in the inevitableness of human progress. For all that, the experiences of our times can give us no more than a vague evidential indication of our belief in original sin. Taken in themselves, it is possible to account for them on purely natural grounds; they can even be excused and turned into common-places.

The belief in original sin, our joint state of perdition in the sight of God, rests solidly on another fact: Christ has died *for us all*. The Cross brings home to us that *we all* needed to be saved, and that *we all* were offered the gift of reconciliation with God. The Cross is the cardinal event of Redemption, the sure guarantee of our faith. The Church has done nothing more than to define and to express in unambiguous words the basic historical fact of the Cross.

There is more still. The same Cross reveals to us that God had pity on us, that He came in search of us in our state of perdition and estrangement from Him, that His fidelity and mercy never lost sight of us, that He still loves us with a fatherly heart. *And that is grace.*

Grace does not hang high above our heads like an aurora borealis on a frosty night. Grace comes down to us like an abun-

dant dew, permeating us through and through, — very much as the breath of spring stirs up nature and awakens it. From grace, i. e., from the power and warmth of God's initial love, we receive the possibility of looking up to Him once more. We know that through faith we are raised, attracted and driven by and towards Him in sorrow and return of love. Once again we have obtained *the right* to live as children of God. Not only that; together, in and through Christ's filial life, there is born in us a new *filial power* which enables us, in union with Him and by the strength of the Spirit, to cry really and truly "Abba — Father" (Rom. 8: 16-17).

To grasp the significance of grace in all its fulness and depth, we should conceive of it as two currents, moving parallel to each other, but in opposite directions: one current streaming down from God to us, the other returning with Christ to God. Blessed John Ruysbroeck has woven his mystical and theological system on the sure warp of this truth. He sees the work of grace as the mighty ebb and flow of the eternal trinitarian life. It comes down from the Godhead, flooding ocean-like the world to give it fertility; it then returns to its source, carrying in its sweep all things back to the unfathomable abyss of the infinite majestic glory.

Briefly put, grace, *seen from God's side*, signifies that God loves us freely, gratuitously. His love is totally undeserved. First, because we creatures can lay no claim to any right before God; and secondly, because our solidarity in evil caused us to lose without appeal all the privileges God had granted in the beginning to mankind. His love is undeserved because all love must, in the last analysis, find in itself the justifying reason for its existence; and this is supremely the case with God's royal love. He loves "because He is God and not a man," "because of His glory and the sanctity of His name."

God's assurance of love is never an empty one. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return no more thither, but soak the earth and water it, and make it to be fertile

and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: *so shall my word coming forth from my mouth*; it shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it" (Is. 55: 10-11). Consequently, grace, *seen from man's side*, is an inner strength, a lifting urge, a yearning for God, a created gift. It lays hold of us in the innermost depth of our human being; from there, it fecundates the multiple various regions of our life, and blossoms visibly in deeds of goodness, holiness and joy.

St. Augustine has expressed this double aspect of grace in the terse formula: "*Quia amasti me, fecisti me amabilem,*" "Because Thou hast loved me, Thou hast made me loveable, and good. God's love has struck us; its wound burns in our hearts until it is healed in God. As St. Augustine writes in his celebrated sentence: "Thou hast made us (in creation and Redemption) and turned us towards Thee, Lord, and our heart finds no peace until it rests in Thee."

Life and Death.

We detect another resonance in Augustine's words: that grace is at one and the same time disquiet and peace, joy and pain, life and death. Before proceeding any further, we shall inquire more attentively into the doctrine of the Church on the effects of grace. God infuses into our soul His living and re-creating grace, and thus *heals and elevates* our human activity. He "heals" by reducing in us the consequences of sin, both original and personal sin, extinguishing them little by little. How this is done is not hard to understand. For sin can always be traced back to some form or other of egotism, self-satisfaction

or pride. Grace, on the contrary, is power to build up a self-forgetting love. As love grows in strength, self-glorification decreases in force.

Grace does more: it "elevates." We shall come back on this aspect later. For the moment, we content ourselves with pointing out that through grace we share in the love of the Son for the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit. No question here of man merely surrendering himself in love, but of man sharing marvelously in the Son's surrender to the Father. *We are "sons" in and with the Son.* Grace has really to be considered as our participation of the divine life, as something divine or, in technical terms, as something supernatural.

— Grace cannot exercise in the soul its "healing" and "elevating" virtue without setting up simultaneously a strong counter-current, a resistance. We are not easily persuaded to give up ourselves; we behave like the drowning man who, dazed and paralyzed with fear, does not dare to jump off a sinking wreck. Our speculation should be wary, though, of turning the mystery of grace into a mere interplay of psychological reactions. Nevertheless, we admit that, since grace operates in the soul, our ordinary psychological experiences can give us an image, a vague reflection of what takes place in the depth of our heart from the very moment it wants, under the influence of grace, to yield to grace; or, as Ruysbroeck puts it pithily: "through God, to God."

A yielding surrender here signifies nothing less than a total surrender to God, as absolute as Christ Himself; for it is He who brings it about through His Spirit. Face to face with the uncompromising glory of God's majesty, our mediocrity, our political manoeuvres and endless capacity for striking a mean between "God and mammon," lose countenance. Man senses that he is threatened within the very fortress of his cherished petty human sureties. His "self," the "self of the world," has organized all things neatly and comfortably around its own interest, and has grown inflated with conceit and vanity; and

now, the "self," with its well-known lies and disenchantments, must die. In the final choice between God and ourselves, we have to let go everything. We feel like a man before a plunge; we have to dare to leap into the menacing ocean of God's all-exacting love. So far, life as a whole had seemed to us safe and reliable in its puppet-show of petty selfishness. And now there opens up a world of unknown breadth, extent and depth in which there appears no end to hardship, struggle and self-renunciation. The God of love discovers Himself to be also the God of awe whose scorching radiance of holiness is all-devouring. In the face of His absolute truth, no lie can stand, no pretext or compromise, no cowardice or artful diplomacy. In sheer truth, grace is a painful death, shot through with anguish; the death of the body affords but a pale image of it.

The saints, who took God's grace and love in right earnest, have told us of "the dark night of the soul," in language which may leave us sceptical, perhaps even suspicious of neurotic extravagance. Unfortunately for us, their witnessing is too strong, too unanimous for us to shake it off with a superior shrug of the shoulders. On their living evidence rests securely the well-established, authentic mystical doctrine which accounts for the passive, perfecting purifications undergone by the soul from the moment it passes from acquired to infused contemplation. The Holy Spirit is henceforth at the helm of the ship, steering its course to the port of higher calling. Riddance of self, or better, decentralizing from self on God alone, causes such a sundering right down to the lower psychic regions that the mystics have found no expression better suited to describe their experience than a supernatural bitter death, a "dark night" for the senses and the spirit.

We, who form the undistinguished general run of men, we rarely reach far enough in the spiritual life to feel, let alone to re-live, such an interior death-struggle. To most Christians, this deep spiritual agony occurs, perhaps, around the time of the death of the body, — or otherwise in purgatory. Man on his deathbed is being robbed of all tangible things he could till that

moment rely upon: health, money, power, honor. Now at long last, he is given a chance to throw himself definitively into the arms of God, and so to risk the leap into love. Without this leap of surrender, away from self and into charity, no one is safe to appear before God. That might be called "the sacrament" of our death.

The dread loss of self, with its smart of inner severance, goes always hand in hand with an incomparable joy and delight. The self is lost, to be found again on a superior level. At the very moment when all things seem to mock at us in the darkness of the night, there dawns the morning. Grace is both death and life, suffering and joy, disquiet and peace. Grace bears out in a unique way what Our Lord Himself underwent for us on the Cross, and what He foretold in the simile: "The hour is come that the Son of Men should be glorified. Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal" (Jn. 12: 23-25).

Grace, an Enduring Gift of God.

So far, we have mainly looked out for God's saving deeds, and we have listened to His words. We may now begin to try to realize more fully those facts of our faith, by dwelling and reflecting on them, in order to determine what, eventually, belongs to Revelation and what strays from it; in other words: we want to know what is orthodox and what is heretical. As a matter of fact, we have already started doing so, because those

different theological functions cannot be sharply divided from each other. No one listens attentively without thinking at the same time.

In the light of the facts and truths of faith, touched upon in the preceding pages, we may declare at once that grace is not to be compared to a sort of spiritual capital each one is free to treasure up for future use at will. Nor is grace a "thing" inside us, a kind of supernatural outgrowth of the soul. Nor is it a definite account credited to us in the book of life, a spiritual life-insurance freeing from cares and worries regarding both ourselves and God. Such concrete illustrations may at best, and for a short moment, call attention to the fact that grace is *really given to us*, truly implanted in us, and not, as Protestants would have it, imputed to us. *I am he* who is sanctified. I may still, and probably shall, fail to keep true to God, whether by trifling infidelities or by acts of self-will; but it is certain that, by God's power, I am His beloved adopted child. Grace is a new creation (2 Cor. 5: 17).

No need to insist that the divine adoption does not confer on me the right to raise myself above other men, or, still less, to glory in the ability to rely, even for an instant, on myself apart from God or side by side with Him. The quality in us of child of God, the rights belonging to an adopted son together, in and through the Only Begotten Son, sanctity, — in a word, grace: *all is a gift uninterruptedly bestowed upon me by God*. Not for a moment do I hold it from myself! From the day of my baptism and for a never ending beatitude, grace remains a living stream ceaselessly coming to me from God, permeating me and drawing me to God. Grace means a receiving from God *continuously* and not on the day of my christening only. Grace is life, is love; not an instant when its flow, so to say, stops and solidifies to become my independent possession. I am able to believe, to hope and love only in as much as I am borne on the life-stream flowing out from God and returning back to God. The one thing I can pride myself on, the only achievement which, in the last analysis, I can claim as wholly mine, is the tepidity which

blocks or hinders the divine influx, and the mortal sin which shuts it off. But whatever good I do in the sight of God, I owe it first and foremost to God, though it is also my good deed, my merit, in so far as I keep acting *by* God, i. e., borne on and helped by His grace. In short: *evil in me is mine exclusively; good in me is by me and by God, in the sense that it is chiefly by God in me.* To express this, St. Augustine has found the striking formula, taken up by the Council of Trent: "God, who makest of Thy gifts our merits." Our merits are really ours, because we co-operate with God; all the means to co-operate are God's gifts, God's never ending grace.

These remarks bear out the great importance of a vivid insight into the mystery of grace, the ever-renewed wonder of love, for which we are indebted to God's initial, unalterable, faithful love. Its importance lies not simply in this that it affords an answer to the many accusations by Protestants who either consistently misconstrue the Catholic doctrine of grace, or, in the heat of controversy, deliberately caricature it. Its importance concerns chiefly ourselves as we stand before God. The more intense our endeavour to live up the truth of our unceasing dependence upon God's grace, the deeper and the more thorough our Christian life. Prayer is always insisted upon as something essential in a Christian. We realize now that prayer is nothing else than the actual remembrance and practice of the primordial fact that we are at every moment indebted to the divine liberality for all things; and this includes even our desire for sanctity, our free co-operation, our perseverance in faith. The love, flowing out from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, always envelops us and embraces us; it permits us not only to return to God love for love and to love the neighbor, but it provides us also with all the means to do so. How appropriate here are the words of the father whose son was possessed of a dumb spirit and who called on Jesus to cure him: "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (Mk. 9: 23). The whole of our Christian life rests on a tension between what we *by our own selves* want to do in pride and unbelief, and what we, *by God*, want to do in humility and

surrender. The life of grace comes to this finally: on the one hand, sustained daily efforts in the practice of mortification, asceticism and painful endeavor, and, on the other hand, the acceptance of being borne aloft on the wings of God's love. We have simultaneously to steer, to row and to set sail. Steering and rowing are God's work until we are able to do so on our own in fitting conformity with the divine will. Grace cannot possibly exist without profound humility, nor be imaged without submission; these two, humility and submission, are inseparably linked together and expressed in prayer and faith. The very moment we attempt to appropriate God's aid or to do it violence from self-interested motives, grace slips through our sinful fingers; we become what Christ most abhorred: pharisees, presumptuous men who flatter themselves that they can observe the law of justice by their own strength and for their own glorification. Against such, the Lord uttered hard words: "Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward" (Mt. 6: 12), a human reward of vain glory and fame; in God's sight, they stand with empty and polluted hands.

Grace, a Presence of God.

We may now enter more deeply into the mystery of grace. It is all to our advantage that accurate thought should be given an entry into the vast spaciousness of this mystery; on condition, though, that we dare not attempt to debase its secrets by the crude light of our reasoning intelligence, nor pretend to measure with the meager yardstick of our reason "what is the breadth and the length, the height and the depth" of God's love (Eph. 3: 18). But it remains our duty to try to learn our faith better;

awe of God and His work does not dispense us from all attempt to grasp the momentousness of grace in human existence. When we do so, we are not dealing with Revelation properly so called, but with constructions of the human mind, wretched rickety ones at that; whatever solidity they have, is ultimately borrowed from the certainty of Revelation.

For the technical explanation of grace, we shall avail ourselves of the philosophy of the person; more particularly, of the description of the presence of one person to another.

Grace then, taken as a whole, may be described as the secret of God's presence in our life. We say so with the conviction that in this we are following the Master's own teaching; for Christ considered no legacy more precious to His Church than His abiding presence-with-us through the Spirit. "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, *there am I in the midst of them*" (Mt. 18: 19-20). St. Matthew closes his Gospel with the assurance of an everlasting presence which Christ promised once more to His Apostles at the final parting: "Behold *I am with you all days* even to the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28: 20). We may add here Christ's words spoken after the Last Supper: "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and *will make our abode with him*" (Jn. 14: 23), words which are followed immediately by the parable of the vine and the branches (Jn. 15: 1-8). Christ's solemn promise was not forgotten by the early Christians in times of persecution. As baptized and believing disciples of Christ, they knew they were no longer living alone, not even whilst undergoing suffering and scorn. "You shall greatly rejoice," Peter told them, "if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in diverse temptations: that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1: 6-7). Peter continues: "*Whom having*

not seen, you love; in whom also now, *though you see him not*, you believe; and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified; receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1: 8). Faith always aims at securing Christ's presence in our life: an inner, real presence overflowing with joy, through the veils of faith. This is the sense in which we take Christ's words addressed to Thomas and reported by John: "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed (in my Resurrection and my consequent omnipresence). Blessed are they (i. e., all those who, both at the time the Gospels were written and ever since, have not known Christ in His glorified humanity) *that have not seen and have believed*" (Jn. 20: 28).

Grace, then, is the mystery of God's living presence in us. The allegory, with which we opened this chapter, described this personal reality in terms of psychology and human love. Now, however, that we are considering the communications between God and man, let it be clear *at once* that we are confronting a situation altogether unique, were it only because God's relations to man are not the same as man's relations to God; on the human level, relations between men are mutual and reciprocal, on a par one might say; not so, though, on the plane of God's communications with man. We might have told the story of an erring young man saved through pure love for a girl. But in the domain of grace, we may in no way suggest that man can give to God something He does not already possess. Whatever man may give or offer to God, whether love, joy, pain, homage or holiness, has begun by being a gift from God. And what is more: when man freely returns the divine gifts, he does so not by himself alone, but together with God, i. e., with Christ and the Holy Spirit. These corrections and precisions are of great importance, if only to meet the objection raised, in bad faith sometimes, by some Protestants that the Catholic doctrine of grace leads man to assume before God an attitude of presumption and arrogance. According to these adversaries, Catholics would treat God as an equal; they would behave like a down-and-out nobleman who tries to establish his claim to the family

title against the branch firmly in possession; we, Catholics, would pretend to lay God under obligation to us by our merits. Happily, our doctrine of merit is nothing of the sort. We shall not deny that some Catholics here and there have, by their behavior, laid themselves open to this charge. But, against such people we do not hesitate to affirm that their conduct amounts to a perversion of the faith, to a camouflaged sin of Pharisaic pride. To the Corinthians, Paul writes without restriction: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. 4: 7).

But let us go on with our search into the mystery of grace, the mystery of a *living* presence.

On one side stands the Godhead in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; on the other side we stand, creatures and sinners, and, despite all, made into the image of God. Veiled in His Providence, God speaks to us in the events of every day and in the concrete situation He destined for us in life. He speaks to us through the Church and also, without intermediary, in our hearts. He speaks to man with love; He calls each one by his name, which is both a commission and a vocation. His word confers upon man the condition, new and peculiarly his own, of being a "thou" before God; for here, as always, God's word is operative, creative. The Father speaks to me as to a "thou" before Him, as to His trusted child reborn and risen already. God's word affects me in the deepest depth of my "self"; He confers upon this personal core in me a density and firmness never suspected before. *I am truly someone before God because* He speaks to me. And there we have in brief what is essential in that creative presence of God in the soul through grace.

This theological notion is worth entering into. The following important addition will help to make it less incomplete and sketchy. It is not enough to say that, through grace, man stands before God; we need to look much higher. God's own inner life of love consists of a unique and intense presence of God to Himself. The Father stands in perfect self-identity, power and density before the Son; so does the Son before the Father; and

the Father and the Son before the Holy Spirit. To describe more adequately the mystery of grace, we should say that, through grace, man is already now introduced, in a hidden though real manner, into the glorious intimacy proper and personal to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our presence to God is a *co-presence*. It is as if through grace, i. e., through the loving election and speech of the Father, we are lifted up to the level of the Son. Grace signifies that, thanks to the divine love and mercy, we are allowed to stand before the Father, with and in the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit; that we share in the ineffable communing of the divine Persons. No use speaking here in terms of dimensions of space, distance or height, as one would in astronomy; we are dealing here with spiritual intensities and realities. The core of our personality is spiritually raised to a re-created density (whence the term "supernatural"), enveloped in the unique density of the Son. In so far as we have in our earthly existence a beginning and real foretaste of paradise, we possess already in germ what will constitute eternal life; we have the aptitude of living and abiding in the all-surpassing intimacy of the divine Persons. If a deficient comparison were asked: through grace, each one of us is like a drop of water lost in the mighty ebb and flow of the divine ocean; thus lost and diffused in the divine life, we are enabled for the first time to be ourselves in a unique way, — ourselves, just because we have become greater than ourselves.

Grace, Life's Dynamism.

Keeping within the framework of these considerations, it will be useful to examine attentively what grace produces and changes in the dynamism of human life. Man is a strange being: a spiritual core in material dimensions, a soul and a body, a person and

matter. We should avoid looking upon the two elements of the human compound as two heterogeneous sorts of things which chance to be linked together; as if, for instance, the soul was a lighter substance haplessly hidden in the coarse wrappings of the body. It would be more correct to view the spirit and the body as two poles, with respective lines of force that are directed towards each other and intermingle. In spirit, I am all I am, but as a spiritual centre of free activity. In body, too, I am all I am, but after the manner of spiritualized matter. No definite boundary line can be drawn between the two, sharply marking off where the spirit stops and matter begins; nor is there a moment when we live purely according to the spirit and then, the next moment, sink into the exclusively animal region of our being. The truth is that my higher powers are present in even the most commonplace, the most lowly activities of my body.

In human activity, several layers of depth are distinguishable. Beneath them all lies the source itself, the central core of being and action: the personal spiritual density, as it issues immediately from God's creative hand. Ruysbroeck saw this central core "hanging onto" God Himself, as something that would be unthinkable apart from the creative action of God uninterruptedly preserving it. Needless to say that the word "depth" is to be taken in a figurative sense. We could with equal aptness speak of the "highest summit" of the self, — a snow-clad mountain peak, lost to sight beyond the level of the clouds, from where our spirit, tense and strained, reaches out to the pure vehement light of the divine glory. This latter comparison has the additional advantage of bringing out that we are never given an immediate awareness of what happens at that spiritual altitude. Should some one prefer it, we could borrow the modern terminology of technical psychology (though in a different sense) and speak of a sub- or super- consciousness, of which we are aware only in so far as it expresses itself in the more tangible concrete actions of the day. For, in fact, the scattered, multivalent and frequently uncertain traces of the ordinary daily actions provide each one of us with the means to judge in our own behalf and,

to some extent, for others, what is really the direction and actual content of life.

Within the core thrones our personality, the "heart of man" as the Bible has it, the wellspring of all our free actions. Personality may be defined as a spiritual possession of self in fundamental liberty, thus in love. At this depth lies hidden the spirit, the pith and marrow of liberty; it is from there that man determines the sense his life is to have. For, at that level only one alternative is possible: either the choice of God in self-surrender, or the choice of self in pride. Besides these two fundamental options, no other love is available. In the words of St. Augustine: there are two kinds of love, dividing the world, "selfish love which dares to despise even God...; love of God that is ready to trample on self" (Civ. Dei: 14: 28).

Borne up on this fundamental option, and closer to the surface, "freedom of choice" enters into play. At this level, human behaviour looks criss-cross. Not only has free choice to fix itself on one of the numberless possibilities presented by the many-sided interests of man's daily life, but it has to make its way through a jungle of impulses, tendencies and restraints, — luxurious growths of an existence confined to time and matter; or, in psychological terms: free choice has to pass through the bodily and psychic determinisms accruing to human nature from heredity, temperament and actual situation in life. Life in such conditions becomes a daily struggle, a cold war of clever diplomacy in give-and-take with oneself, delaying tactics keeping an eye on the main chance; it becomes a shooting war when we have to overcome ourselves and make dominant what is best in us.

The question arises: where, in this complexity, does grace come in? Ruysbroeck has neatly indicated that God works "from within outwards." The Church teaches that, by the grace of His living re-creating presence in the soul, God *heals and elevates* human activity. This healing and elevating dynamism is secretly sown like a seed in the depth of the soul. Yielding to the appeal

of the Father's word, we are attracted from within, pulled and driven. High up in our being, the rays of God's eternal love awaken a gentle hunger, a nostalgic longing, a tender yearning for God. The icy crust of selfishness begins to thaw under the warmth of God's breath. Assenting to the persuasive urge of His presence, our heart unfolds and develops towards Him. Free from self and already attached to God, *our fundamental option*, made at baptism, grows steadily in firmness, assurance and strength. But now, closer to the surface level, though always resting on the fundamental option and borne along by the driving power of the deeper will, our "freedom of choice," which we exercise in daily actions, becomes more consistent, more consciously and deliberately directed to the task of life. Such is the normal pattern of growth in virtue and holiness. The gradual process of bringing unity in the multiplicity of human activity goes steadily on under the gentle influence of the divine presence.

In the Gospel of St. John, Our Lord Himself speaks plainly of the attraction God exerts on the human soul. "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him... Every one that hath heard of the Father and hath learned, cometh to me" (Jn. 6: 44 f.).

During the octave of Pentecost, the priests read in their breviary a moving passage from a sermon of St. Augustine in which the holy doctor brings into play all his masterly talents in order to explain the Johannine text to the simple folk of Hippo: "Do not think that you are drawn against your will; the mind is also drawn by love... If it was right in the poet to say: Every one is drawn by his own pleasure (Virgil, Ec. 2), — not necessity, therefore, but pleasure, not obligation but delight, — how much more boldly ought we, Christians, to say that man is drawn to Christ when he delights in truth, delights in blessedness, delights in justice, delights in life everlasting, all of which is Christ?" Suddenly, Augustine appeals to the experience of his audience: "Give me one who loves, and he understands what I say; give me one who longs, give me one who hungers, give

me one who is travelling in this wilderness and thirsting and panting after the fountain of his eternal home; give me such a one, and he knows what I mean." Further on, feeling powerless to express himself adequately, he has recourse to simple illustrations well within the understanding of the small people of Hippo: "Hold out a green branch to a sheep and you draw it. Nuts are shown to a boy and he is enticed: he is drawn by what he runs to, drawn by loving it, drawn without hurt to the body: drawn by the bonds of the heart. If then these things which among earthly delights and pleasures are shown to those who love such things, have power to attract, since it is truly said, Every one is drawn by his own pleasure; does not then Christ, as revealed by the Father, attract us?" (In Joan. Evan. 26: 4).

Grace, One and Many.

Textbooks on grace are often discouraging and confusing. The further one reads in them, the greater the variety of graces met with. At the end one fails to see the woods for the trees. And that has surely happened more than once in the history of theology. Bewilderment, however, is no reason to dismiss summarily the long list of terms found in scientific, or ecclesiastical, theology; for, most of the divisions and subdivisions of grace have been brought in either by the Church herself, or by the necessity of rebutting the errors and heresies which arose in the course of centuries. That is why the theological student needs to know a great deal of the history of dogma, were it only to grasp the bearing of those precisions and

definitions. Because grace has not always been looked at from the same angle, it would be possible to draw up two parallel columns of definitions which to the uninitiated seem contradictory.

The purpose of this book is to emphasize the main truths concerning grace, a few of which have been thrust into the background during the recurring controversies with the Protestants. They are of exceptional importance to the Christian because they throw light on what a life of grace actually means to man. We shall do our best to "see the woods."

First and foremost, grace is God's love for us: the love of the Father who calls us to be, with the Son, His own children, and who draws us to Himself by the power of the Holy Spirit. Grace is also, though in a derived sense, a created gift: an infused love for God caused in us by God's first love and staying in us as an immanent supernatural dynamism of life. It is the latter which is usually meant when modern theologians speak of grace.

Considered as a lasting gift which affects our being in depth and keeps it in a "state of grace," this dynamism is called "sanctifying grace." We add at once that the word "sanctifying grace," as technically defined for use in theological thought, does by no means cover all the treasures God has bestowed upon us.

We said that this dynamism is of divine origin and affects us in the depth of our personal density, the "heart of man," the level at which our twofold unity of body and soul lies gathered in its totality and intensity, as yet undifferentiated; the level, too, where our being "hangs onto God" and unceasingly issues from the divine creative hand. Obviously, no possible direct awareness can tell what exactly is that core of our self. It is there, however, that our true and deepest liberty strikes its roots, is given a still fuller sense by grace. Liberty, total possession of self, has to be exercised in what might be called our ground-will, the total surrender of self to good or to evil, the basic

"commitment to the task of life," the fundamental opting of a determined attitude towards God and the neighbor. On that level, theology will place the infused "theological virtues," faith, hope and charity, and "the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Once again, of that ground-will no direct awareness is possible; the nature of its act is not on a par, or comparable, with the numerous actions of daily life. The ground-will lies far below the level of consciousness; it can express itself only in and through the clearer actions of the day. It *animates* these daily actions from within, ennobles them and, ultimately, determines whether they are the actions of a person or not. The ground-will lives hidden in the varied activity of the "choosing will," the "free will" of classical philosophy.

Of the "choosing will" we have a more satisfactory knowledge; we are in contact with it in daily experience. We are aware that it is "we who decide to act or not to act, we who choose to act this way or that way." And that is precisely the definition of "free will" found in textbooks.

General experience shows clearly that man cannot escape making many and varying choices. To determine whether this or that particular action, with its immediately preceding choice, is properly the action of a person: that belongs to the fundamental "commitment to life," the ground of conscious activity. Animals, too, have a sort of "freedom of choice," but different from the freedom of a person. Grace exerts its influence on the choice to be made by preparing it in us, subtending it and bringing it into effect. We are justified, therefore, in speaking of "actual graces," and in dividing them into "prevenient, cooperating and efficacious graces." All actual graces may be reduced to three heads: light and certitude for the intellect, strength and perseverance for the will, delight or consolation and joy for the heart.

These technical distinctions, familiar to us since the days of our catechism, should not cause us to forget that grace is one living reality, "coming from God, in view of God."

Grace and Freedom.

To be complete and perfect, every free action of ours needs a double level to run its course: the ground-level of our total surrender and, closer to consciousness, the level of the concrete choice. Activity on the ground-level is, of its very nature, less variable and haphazard than it is on the conscious level. We may compare it to a slow maturing process, whether in authenticity and interior truth, or in mendacious emptiness of life. Whichever way we explain or describe it, our freedom on this level is one of growth and increase; it comes to us after the manner of a vocation which gropes its way towards clearer and firmer self-realization. Freedom on the second level adapts itself progressively to the new problems constantly raised by the changing situation of place, age, profession, responsibility and individual history. The two levels combined ensure to our freedom its continuity, its supple mobility, its creativeness and power of adaptation.

Both levels should normally work together in harmony and mutual relation. But in fact they fail to do so on several counts. For one thing, we are beings immersed in matter. For another, to speak theologically, our freedom on both levels has been impaired in its integrity by the estrangement from God and by the state of perdition, inherited at birth and rendered more actual by our personal sins. The normal development towards perfect personal freedom is seriously hampered by what Simone Weil called "*la pesanteur humaine*," i. e., by our creaturely condition and by our materiality with its train of determinisms and checks ("*Hemmungen*"), — not to mention our sinfulness.

It is not hard to see how sinfulness acts as a brake on the smooth running of a perfect freedom in action. The fundamental option and total surrender, we spoke of just now, imply a stand taken in respect of total reality; it is always and inevitably

a question of "all or nothing"; the "more or less" lies in the growth, not in the initial choice. Either I surrender myself completely to God who, in sheer truth, is the source and ultimate goal of my whole being; or I refuse to surrender and lock myself up in my self. As St. Augustine remarked long ago, there is no other alternative. Catholic theology holds that a man is either in the state of mortal sin or in the state of grace. Confused, undecided situations, so well known to vacillating mediocrity, are to be traced back to the weakness with which the fundamental option was made, — though, in the main, they rather belong to the domain of activity where the initial option has to be lived up to and applied to concrete life.

We know well enough how ambiguous life can be: a sinner keeps looking for God, and a religious goes on seeking his self-satisfaction in disobedience and tepidity. As the saying goes: "They don't believe in it."

The one alternative open to man is, thus, the choice between God and self. Now, it happens that, in actual daily life, God must habitually be discovered in our dealings with our neighbors; and that is the reason why true love acquires great sacramental value the moment it becomes an absolutely disinterested, pure self-gift of one person to another. With St. John we may repeat that all true love is born of God and leads to God; a truth which holds good even for those people who, in spite of their action, fancy they must deny God's existence. God is love. We understand why St. John adds: "Whoever hateth his brother, does not love God."

Our state of sinfulness, whether it be the privation of grace inherited through original sin, or the consequence of personal actual sin, can always be shown to have its source in some form or other of self-love and self-indulgence; the instance of hardened pride in the final *mortal* sin makes no exception. What is more, any and all form of self-love, which shuts out God, implies at the same time the most thorough-going existential lie of life; for, it is the refusal to acknowledge ourselves for what we really

are: the refusal to recognize that our substance belongs to God, because it comes from God and is due to return to God.

For the same reason, sin is a deliberate attempt to destroy our freedom. Sin is a paradox, inasmuch as it is a wilfully sustained maiming and denial of what is essentially our freedom. This is why sin is so monotonous, as the priest soon learns from the ministry of the confessional. It explains also why genuine sanctity, so different from the stereotyped holiness portrayed in some pious books, reveals itself original, always new and arresting: it resembles God's own creative freedom.

We mentioned just now that the normal unfolding of our freedom is painfully hindered by the material elements in our being. We did so with the intention of pointing to the primary fact that we are not pure spirits, but essentially spiritual bodies, or better, embodied persons. There is no denying that we are free, but free in the midst of a struggle with an odd assortment of constraints. Much thought has been given today to the many elements in our human composition which either completely evade the ruling of our free will, or can be influenced only indirectly by a wise diplomacy and a trained self-assessment. Much could be learned on this subject from history and psychology. The exercise of freedom in this world supposes a rare art, an experience of life, a spiritual hygiene and balance which few men can boast of.

Long before we get a chance to use our freedom, we are caught in the toils of determinisms and forces for which we are not responsible and which we simply have to accept. Think of our birth, our heredity, our education at home and at school, the spiritual climate of our time, race and country; think also of the caprice of events, such as failures, accidents, favorable or adverse conditions of life, — in a word: the whole concrete situation which we, men of earth, have to face moment by moment.

In this connection, we should like to call special attention to all the forms of psychic weaknesses and ailments which

modern research has brought to our knowledge. Medicine is increasingly aware that the so-called organic diseases are somehow linked with our psychic states. Whatever the source of a psychosis, whether it be fatigue or heredity or illness, the tragedy of such a state is that human dignity and freedom, thus also life of grace, are endangered.

Let it not be forgotten, though, that such sicknesses never attack what makes up in us the central core of the life of the spirit. In other words, a sick man does not *really* lose his dignity of human being; we, Christians, have to stand by, and defend the rights which, as human person, he possesses even when he becomes a burden to society. The sickness affects only the faculties, the powers and mechanisms, or whatever is necessary to give the fundamental personal option its full human scope.

The moment he decides to act in concrete life, man has, from within his fundamental self-surrender, to appeal to all his powers and aptitudes which lie in the no-man's-land between the deep-seated core of the spiritual self and the body. To act freely, we must in the first place think, therefore understand, and grasp a great number of things; we must, further, exercise our will and, therefore, dispose of a will-power normally developed, braced and stimulated by the emotions and the imagination. It is the whole man who acts, with heart and soul, with will and emotions, — not excluding the conditions of the body, such as health, muscular strength, etc.

Grace renews and raises in Christ the whole man; the whole man is reborn by grace. This "new creation," as Scripture calls it, will be fully manifest in "the new heaven and on the new earth," when in glory we shall all be one in Christ. Until that day, God works in us "from within outwards." The spiritual dynamism, i. e., the infused charity which God's love has set up in us, must from within spread throughout our being, and yet respect our human condition. The higher freedom we received in Christ must now grow in our life and express itself in our ordinary daily actions. Our emotions, with all that belongs to our

bodies, gradually come under the influence of the higher love born in us. Men generally fail to notice this process, because they don't give God a free hand. The saints alone can, and do, bear authentic witness to this transforming operation of grace.

And now a provisional conclusion. A long list of terms could be prepared to indicate the many ways in which grace, from within, draws and attunes us to God; theology has done so in the past. The reality of grace, however, remains always essentially one and the same thing: *an ever purer love for God, offspring of God's own love for us*. It is of the utmost importance that we realize this. Only in this light does the technical theology of grace become intelligible and reveal its meaning for our personal life.

Life of Grace, Moral Conduct and Psyche.

Some one might think that in the preceding pages we have accumulated abstractions and futile considerations to reach a fairly obvious conclusion. Be that as it may, let us not forget that the simplest truths are most easily overlooked. While writing these pages, we had in mind especially the many priests and religious who look back upon the days of their theological studies on grace with dissillusionment and despondency; we wanted to be of some help to them. And we hope that our explanations will prove of some use also to the lay people who dare to tackle a technical treatise on grace.

We had still another purpose in view, one of great interest to any religious soul; a purpose that is also suitable to the layman in search of a deeper understanding of his faith. A well instructed

Christian should be able to distinguish clearly between life of grace, moral conduct and psyche.

Grace is given us directly by God alone to be our source of life; it manifests itself in the fundamental self-surrender to God through faith, hope and charity, the three theological virtues. Moral conduct differs from grace; its ruling principles are the natural law, the ecclesiastical laws, the civil or social directives, all of which provide our activity with the necessary guidance here on earth. As to psychic deportment: as we saw, it may be subject to compulsions, determined by normal instincts or, possibly also, by more or less severe psychotic states.

Neither moral conduct nor psychic deportment lie outside grace's sphere of influence; though grace does not affect and permeate all and everything in man immediately, at the same time and to the same degree.

A typical example will bring out the main burden of the question we want to consider. It is rather fashionable today to compare confession with psychoanalysis. Some unbelievers admire the Catholic Church for achieving an insight into the therapeutic value of self-manifestation by man to man, long before Freud or Jung found that out. And some Christians, ill-informed on their faith, are heard at times to agree with this view. But it is a wrong view.

Confession is a sacrament, instituted by Christ and given to the Church as means to forgive sins through the absolution an ordained priest pronounces over the penitent. Obviously, the sacrament of confession belongs strictly to the divine plane of grace: God alone forgives sin and restores His love to man; the Church and the priest are instruments. That is all.

Another example: spiritual direction. Spiritual direction may be given in or outside the confessional; its object is not only sin, but also the guidance of a particular man's concrete life. In our own days, direction is usually confided to a priest; formerly, it was entrusted to lay people as well. A good director should have spiritual experience and piety; he should be a man

of God. If he has human experience as well, and theological knowledge with a personal life of prayer, he will find these assets a great help to stand by the "spiritual child" in word and deed. In case the director has also ecclesiastical authority, he can in the name of God lay down a definite line of conduct; it is God, then, who acts through man. In general, though, it is an established principle that direction should be as discreet as possible and leave the door open to those inspirations and designs of God which lie outside the human initiative or anticipation of the guide.

A healthy, Christian-inspired psycho-analysis has nothing to do with sin; it deals with psychotic illnesses and reverently stops at the threshold of religious conscience.

Absolution, spiritual direction and psycho-analytical treatment could very well fall to the charge of one and the same man; though this may not always be desirable. A doctor, as a medical man, has no authority over conscience. The priest, on his side, should avoid trying an amateurish hand at delicate and dangerous methods which are best left to the trained psychiatrist. The three ways of taking care of a soul resemble each other in some respects, but only superficially. It does happen that a man experiences in confession a beneficial sense of psychic relief; or that an allayed anxiety proves to be for some others an excellent preparation for a truer knowledge of their sin, thus also for a good contrition. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we have here three very different things. To mix them up would inevitably result in leveling the highest to the rank of the lowest: everything would become psychology — an unfortunate tendency much in vogue today.

We shall then carefully distinguish the life of grace, moral conduct and psyche. Let us start with the difference between grace and moral conduct.

The difference is best seen in the light of what we have already indicated. We perceive it easily enough in some instances. An obvious one is the case of the baptized children: they possess

within themselves the life of grace, but have still to learn a variety of things before they can lead a moral life as it should be. Another instance can be taken from the experience in mission countries; more than one missionary may have something to learn in this respect. It amounts to this: in Africa, let us say, adult Catholics (or even ordained priests) really believe in Christ and live in a state of grace; yet they have great difficulty in freeing themselves from the pagan mentality in which they have been brought up. We are not thinking here of Western habits and customs new converts might adopt after baptism; we have in mind the basic Christian principles taught by the Gospel and faith. Is it so certain that, after their conversion in the seventh and eighth centuries, our forefathers lived up to the pure Christian doctrine overnight? A friend of mine, specialized in missiology, spoke one day of what he had learnt from an attentive study of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae* concerning the decrees and statutes promulgated by the German Councils. For long centuries, the Church has had to insist with the German people that magic and superstition, vendetta, divorce and polygamy (especially in the upper classes) were contrary to Christian principles; that dukes and princes had no right to interfere in ecclesiastical matters.

We ourselves, dare we be sure that, after so many centuries, all trace of paganism has disappeared from our civilization, today especially, when our modern world seems threatened with a revival of heathenism? An enlightened, balanced conscience, a correct appreciation of what an authentic Christian morality demands, are for some genuinely Christian families things still in process of formation. Only naïve rationalism will hold that to lead a Christian moral life it is enough to *know* what is forbidden, to have read or to have heard once what is recommended.

Theology has always distinguished between "objective" and "subjective" sin. The precept of hearing Mass on Sundays will illustrate the distinction. The Church declares that not hearing Mass on Sundays is a mortal sin. By this she means that to her

mind, guaranteed by a God-given teaching authority, the wilful neglect of Mass on Sundays constitutes a danger to, a weakening or a loss of the life of grace for the Christian in ordinary, normal circumstances. Which is not the same as to say: so and so commits such and such a sin. It is not impossible to come across some Catholics who, through no fault of theirs, have their conscience so deteriorated and so deformed, and find their religious insight so lowered that they fail to perceive what is wrong in their action and, consequently, cannot want it.

No one should infer from our remarks that it is up to each one to decide for himself what is sin and what is not sin. It belongs to Revelation to teach what sin is. All we affirm here is that "God alone judges me" (1 Cor. 4: 4), because God, the "searcher of hearts and reins" (Ps. 7: 10), is the only one who can and will judge to what degree a living man is wicked in his heart.

All this is of enormous importance. In the first place, it disposes of the confusion reigning in the minds of those intellectuals who neglect to complete their religious formation and, then, find themselves unable to understand what the catechism and moral theology mean by mortal sin. In the second place, it reminds us of something of far greater consequence. Our Lord, and after Him the Apostles, warned repeatedly against judging one's brethren: "Judge not, that you may not be judged" (Mt. 7: 1). Now, it is the unpleasant habit of many so-called "good people," for whom the life of grace consists mainly in purely external observances, to be hard and pitiless on men who do not always conform to Christian precepts interpreted, of course, from the point of view of an unbearably rigid bourgeois or village mentality. Pharisaism is the blight afflicting "pious people" today, as it did the Pharisees in Israel, those men who flaunted their "purity and justice" in public. It is striking to see how Christ showed His wrath almost exclusively against the world of such hard, self-conscious and despising "pious folk."

An imperfect moral conduct does not necessarily imply that a man is excluded from God's love, deprived of grace and,

therefore, in a state of mortal sin. It is not enough to see a man offend against Christian precepts to be justified in presuming that he incurs actual guilt before God. What, indeed, has been his education, his youth, the moral climate in which he lived? What were the false principles he has imbibed from his surroundings? Perhaps his spiritual balance has been upset, so that conscience now fails to function correctly, even in cases when he "knows" that such and such things are evil and forbidden. We had better examine our own consciences. Many among the Catholics do not go to Mass on Sundays. True enough. But why? What have we, priests, done to enlighten them on what happens at the altar? And what about our own way of celebrating Mass, when we race through the Latin prayers with the reckless speed so marked in some churches? Of course, we know that Mass, said by a priest in the state of mortal sin, retains its value intact before God, because Mass is always first and foremost Christ's offering renewed by the Church as a whole. Still, *judging by ordinary human standards*, have we a right to expect the bulk of the faithful to stay indifferent to a lack of formation, to liturgical untidiness and formalism on the part of the clergy?

Morality is not synonymous with grace. Grace moves in the depth of the heart; moral conduct belongs more to the level of our "freedom of choice." And as we saw, it is not always an easy matter to translate the free fundamental surrender of the heart to God into the responsible actions of a concrete life.

It remains to be emphasized that, normally, a life of grace demands a moral life lived in accordance with Christian precepts, and that its aim is high perfection. Our Lord Himself is quite clear on this subject: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn. 14: 15). John, more than the other Apostles, repeats the Master's teaching. In him we recognize that levelheaded, practical realism so characteristic of the great mystics which makes them reject, almost fanatically, all forms of "pious talk" and cheap emotionalism. The reader who wants convincing proof of this should read the whole of John's first epistle. We have

already quoted many of its texts in which the sacred author speaks in profound and sublime language of the all-pervading mystery of a God who is charity; they all end with the unrelenting, practical conclusion: "When we love God, we keep his commandments. *For this is the charity of God*, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not heavy. For whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world" (1 Jn. 5: 2-4).

God's commandment is, in the first place, love of one's brethren; John never tires on this subject. "Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God. And every one who loveth, is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is charity... My dearest, if God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. (But) if we love one another, God abideth in us and his charity is perfected in us. In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit... Let us therefore love God, because God hath first loved us. If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he who loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? This commandment we have from God that he who loveth God love also his brother" (1 Jn. 4: 7-21). Texts like this rank among the most beautiful inspired comments on what we have called the "sacramentality" of fraternal love.

We may conclude. It is abundantly clear that a life of grace demands morality, even holiness. It is no less evident that for most men, in the concrete conditions of their life, a great deal is required before they are able to come up to the standard of their election to grace; ill will and tepidity are not necessarily involved. In actual life, a tension — thus, a difference — may be experienced between the life of grace and moral conduct. As a rule, such tension is gradually eased and overcome by the dynamic power of grace, identical with love; in some individuals it may endure for life, without entailing guilt. God judges.

Any one, with any knowledge of men, knows of a further possible tension in man: a strain between life of grace and the

psychic urges. To put it differently and in plain words: a harmonious, psychic health is no proof that God has given us His grace; but it is a sure indication that God will exact from us, the healthy ones, more than from the others less favored.

Let us take an extreme case, to make our minds clear. Mental deficiencies and emotional disorders do not necessarily prevent a man from being called to holiness, and from attaining to it. For, what is holiness? Basically, it is just this: grace leading, first, to an unconditional acceptance of the situation in life as foreseen for us at every moment by Providence, and, then, to a filial surrender to the call of the Father in imitation of and in union with Christ. A man's condition may be ever so pitiable; he may be smitten with irrational anxieties, scruples and obsessions; he may have his moral conduct crippled by them; as long as he perseveres, humbly and lovingly, in his efforts to accept his life as it is, he is progressing towards real holiness, — all the holiness he can reach in his trying circumstances.

This assertion of ours is likely to scandalize those who know of Christian life no more than some external conventions and proprieties. Their narrow outlook makes them blind to the problems. Such staid temperaments, too staid perhaps in the sight of God, have still to learn how to appreciate their less favored brethren. To an inveterate kleptomaniac, the difficult commandment is, of course, the seventh; though his infirmity is no excuse for not trying his level best to observe it. Do what he may, a complete cure for him seems problematic. In his case, a qualified doctor will prove of greater use than a pitiless spiritual director. His sanctification will lie in the patient enduring of his shame and misery. Since holiness consists in the love of God, fruit of God's own first love, a kleptomaniac's perseverance in humble submission and love of God gives more joy to heaven "than the ninety-nine just who need" no conversion (Lc. 15: 7).

Kleptomania can be an unmistakable case of tension between life of grace and the psychic urges. Other instances could be produced which are not usually given sufficient notice. Here

is one or other. "Difficult" young people, during the critical period of puberty, are probably not so "good" as the "nice" boys and girls whose praise is on everybody's lips, both at school and at home, and who are cited as models for others to follow. Instead of praising or blaming a purely external behaviour, would it not be better to ask the question: Which of the "difficult" and "nice" young people stands closer to God? It may be with them as with some Christians of high moral standing who show themselves so hard to please that they vex every one by their negging "egotism," from the moment a serious sickness, or old age, overtakes them. Is their aggravating conduct to be blamed on a sinful, self-opinionated will rather than on the nature of their sickness, or senile state?

Whatever we have said so far aims at making it definitely impossible to apply the yardstick of average human reason to the glorious mystery of the divine love in souls. God's grace in me has nothing to do with fashion, "conformism," good table manners, cultured language, — though these may contribute their share to an increase of respect on the part of my neighbor. Grace has not even much to do with *our* notion of goodness and righteousness. In sheer riches, simplicity and eversurprising divine freshness, grace surpasses all our dreams of beauty.

The Awareness of Grace.

One more point remains to be examined, before we end this chapter and begin the next one.

The reader has surely gathered that the attraction of grace, the God-given dynamism in us, connotes a new element, different from all natural impulses, tendencies and inspirations. It is

something divine in our life, aptly called "supernatural." Here, the question may be asked: granted that this new dynamic force constitutes an additional factor in the complex reality of our conduct, and granted that it is of an entirely different nature: does it follow that we can experientially tell it apart from the natural factors? Can we have conscious certitude of the presence of grace in us? Can we make out its divine origin?

At first sight, we are tempted to say "yes." Closer attention, however, suggests a more prudent reply. To begin with, we propose a first, rather superficial, reason for caution: the very complexity of our psychology. The numerous lines of force in our biological, psychic, rational and spiritual functions are so mixed up together, so interwoven and tuned to each other that it seems impossible, even on the natural plane, to unravel a single strand from the entangled skein. We know very well how hard it is, in our moments of greatest sincerity, to hit on the determining motive of any one of our actions. As the saying goes: "It takes many things to make a pudding"; or, more to the point here: "Every man has many reasons for what he does: the good reasons and the real one." Those familiar with the practice of the examination of conscience have learned how cleverly the "real reason" dodges detection. They know that, on the level of conscious motivation, a man can practically never single out one unmixed "real reason." Man's nature being what it is, there are always at hand a host of motives of varying quality which, at the precise moment of deciding on anything, have come to a diplomatic and political agreement, not always to be proud of. The "real reason," if the word has any meaning — and it has —, lies hidden deep down on the level of the fundamental will and its option. And the latter, as we saw, are never within our immediate awareness, and, therefore, cannot be objects of experience; but they betray themselves to be the substructure which they are in an indirect way, i. e., through the general trend of our behaviour; and this only in the case of normal, balanced people. When psychic integration is impaired (as may happen to any one of us at moments of sickness, depression,

fatigue or shock), the numerous psychic disturbances on the surface make it often impossible to form a distinct and complete picture of the over-all trend of our conduct.

The divine presence urges us Godwards from within. At the start, grace stirs up our fundamental will, permeates it from within and increasingly animates it in the measure we, as persons, yield to God's claims on us. In the last analysis, that is precisely what we call "sanctifying grace": a fundamental, interior and actively intense orientation of our innermost self towards God; a steady, dynamically decisive opening of the heart to God in faith, hope and charity.

Let us repeat once more: of such a thing we can have no immediate, clear consciousness. First of all, such a dynamic state of "commitment" is not the proper object of our perceptive faculties; and secondly, God's discretion is involved. Grace never means compulsion. It does not penetrate into the delicate fabric of our psyche as would a hard body in another substance. It rather adjusts itself to the quality and temper of each person; the rich and varied lives of the saints bear this out. God respects our freedom as the reflection of His own. Besides, God is not exterior to us. He is no foreigner. In the words of St. Augustine, He is "intimior intimo meo," "deeper within me than my innermost self." Not for a moment can we escape from His all-enveloping power: our most real self "hangs" utterly on His creative hand. And this is the ultimate reason why God, and God alone, can influence free will so deeply; why, from within, He acts decisively upon it without constraining it, still less undoing it or destroying it.

There remains another reason why the action of God's grace lies outside experience; on religious grounds, it is the essential reason, but usually overlooked. It is this: grace is, on our side, a divine way of acting under the influx of the Spirit. Action under grace is *ours* in the rigorous sense of the term; at the same time, and in a still more thorough sense, *it is God's sovereign action in us*. In one and the same action, two freedoms converge and blend, each one preserving intact its own distinctiv-

eness. There is, first, the sovereign transcendent freedom of God Himself; and secondly, there is our own human freedom, imitation of the divine freedom, given in creation, raised and healed by grace. Now, God cannot suffer Himself to be experimented upon. He may not become the object of our bold psychological inquisitiveness. Faith, and faith exclusively, reaches God, in deference to what we are and to what God is. That is the principal, final reason why we cannot draw the divine action into the field of psychological or anthropological tests.

Have we, then, to give up the idea of all knowledge of grace at work in us? This point must be saved for treatment in the last section of the book.

Diverse and Complex, yet so much One.

Meanwhile, we shall conclude this chapter with a last comparison.

Man is like a mountain lake. Out of the depths of massive rock-formations, powerful streams of crystalline water well up to the surface. The clear and mighty waters spread out over the entire face of the lake in broad, smooth currents. Other factors, too, enter into play: the nature and structure of the encircling rock-formations, the rhythm of the seasons, the sun and the nights, the wind and the rain, the fauna and flora. The latter could not maintain their existence in the peaceful waters without the hidden well-spring which, from within, feeds, cleans and fills the lake. It is the source which feeds the mighty currents moving through the waters, determines the luminosity and purity of the water under the play of light and clouds.

Man is a deep lake. God placed him in a concrete situation which, for the most part, is not of man's choosing: family, nation, race, culture, latent heredity, and the more superficial gains from education and individual history. But all this cannot ripen into a noble human existence, into a life befitting a child of God, if man does not possess, in the depth of his soul, the "living waters that flow into eternal life," the secret vital dynamism, the creative force promoting love and self-surrender. God is love. Man, made in the image and likeness of God, transformed into Christ — the effulgence of the Father —, is primarily love, reflecting that first love which Dante speaks of in his great poem on heaven: "Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle," "love which moves sun and stars."

Part III

What May We Expect from Grace?

The question sounds business-like, rather cheering perhaps. We need to be cautious. Where God is involved, the question should not be: what can we get? but: what does God expect from us? The correction is not out of place, today especially when we witness a certain "humanizing" tendency in religious apologetics. Besides, who in his senses dares ask from the one he loves: what can I get from you? A true lover seeks the good of the beloved, not his own gain. Grace is love. Though the above question is bound to raise objections, nonetheless we formulate it; *after all we have said so far*, it has a real, if secondary, meaning. *Taking into account all that precedes*, we are justified in examining the problem of the contribution of Revelation and theological thought to the general study of man. More precisely, perhaps, we may ask what grace changes in man. The reply is: nothing and everything. This final chapter undertakes to give nuance to such a bold answer.

Grace Changes Nothing.

To begin with, we say that grace adds nothing to man's earthly nature and situation. Can we maintain this contention, and to what extent?

We said "nothing." For grace affects *directly and immediately* only the spiritual core of our "person"; it affects the rest in so far as it follows up the spiritual lines of force which emanate from that core and spread through the whole of our activity. Actual grace (as, for instance occasioned by good example, an inspiring book, etc.) opens the mind to divine things and awakens in the will a spiritual taste for them. But *all the rest remains what it was*.

There remains the world with its laws and the inevitable sequence of cause and effect. Storms and spring tides shatter the dikes on the coast, though baptized men and women are residing there. Cloudbursts cause rivers to break through their banks. Earthquakes lay waste whole cities. Historical laws continue to rule the destiny of nations, races and societies. Political mistakes must provoke re-actionaries. Catholic states, parties or banks fare no better than others. It matters not a whit whether I am in a state of grace or not; when my automobile hits a tree, the consequences are disastrous for the automobile, the tree and, possibly, the driver.

There remains also my body with its health, its illnesses, weaknesses and habits, — and, unfortunately, its unmannerly tricks increasing with age. Grace has nothing in common with antibiotics. Each winter in this chilly country, I shall run up my usual score of colds. The surgeon, who examines my case, need not inquire whether I am in a state of grace; he may safely diagnose my condition and be satisfied that a successful resection of the stomach is necessary.

There remains further my psyche with its inborn, inherited or acquired urges, complexes and disturbances. Grace has nothing to do with leptosomes; it will not change my primary characteristics into secondary ones. Sacraments, as such, will cure neither neurasthenia nor schizophrenia; they leave a free hand to the psychiatrist, whether he advocates behaviorism, or the method of Freud, Jung or Adler.

There remain, too, my reasoning faculties and the peculiar nature of my will power, at least in their psychological and functional characteristics. Grace does not improve my memory, nor sharpen my wits, nor strengthen my volition, — not directly at least.

Why mention such obvious truths? For the simple reason that these truths, so absurdly evident in the abstract, often lose their plainness when they affect us personally in the concrete. The time is past when professors at the Paris Sorbonne could come out with "*Je n'ai jamais trouvé l'âme au bout de mon*

bistouri," "I have never found the soul under my scalpel," and not even provoke a smile at their dreadful nonsense. But one still meets with scientists who fancy they can annex grace and the life of grace to the domain of their research, if only to deny their existence. Believing Christians, too, fail in logic when they hear of a fatal automobile accident and exclaim, "How is it possible! Such a good man!" Driving an automobile involves equal risks for all, good men or monsters.

As a first conclusion, we can hardly do better than hark back to the cautions set down in the first part of this book. Each science enjoys its own peculiar method. This method is conditioned by the specialized object. We now add that it is of the utmost importance to remember that the specialized objects are not affected by grace either in their inner structure or in their functional relations. Consequently, the sciences remain undisturbed by the theology of grace as long as they keep to the investigation and ascertaining of fixed laws and relations between the *same specific phenomena*. One exception might be made here: philosophy takes up a privileged place as the "handmaid" of theology, — to use a metaphor, dear to the Middle Ages, for something that is no more than a half truth. All the other sciences, as far as they move and operate within the limits of a clearly delineated field, need not worry about the question of grace; they enjoy an inalienable freedom of research and action within the framework of their speciality. This does not mean, however, that a man of science, as a human being and still less as a Christian, has a right to remain indifferent to the reality of grace. For instance: a specialist will owe it to his faith not to fall an easy prey to out-and-out materialistic hypotheses. His belief in grace will serve him as an alarm, but it will never interfere with matters belonging to his domain and method. We should add the remark that a surgeon would be an unworthy Christian if, before a dangerous operation, he showed serene indifference to the state of soul of the patient. His profession may, indeed, demand a great deal of discretion and objectivity, but never indifference to essentials.

Redemption through Incarnation.

More remains to be said. We are coming to a second conclusion, the premises of which lie in deeper truth; which will afford us fresh light on the *full salvific significance* of grace. We shall not satisfy ourselves with a ready-made, pedantic distinction between the downward trend of nature and the uplifting energy of grace. We have to dwell upon some theological aspects of Redemption and grace, some points of considerable speculative and practical importance.

As we saw, grace and Redemption are, more than anything else, God's creative, loving way of speaking to each one of us individually in Christ and in the Church. Now, the divine word does not find us located in the rarified regions of a stratospheric spirituality, where the trifling, though very real, cares and responsibilities of this puny world are lost to sight. God speaks to us *in the very concrete situation which is ours*. The essential message of Redemption and grace is that we must surrender ourselves to God in faith, hope and charity, *here and now*, on this earth, in the spot to which Providence has consigned us and in which He wills us to dwell provisionally. As R. Guardini wrote: it is planned by Providence *that God should speak to us really through the details of a determined situation*. God is present in the daily events of our life, calling us to His love. It is precisely this divine presence which gives our personal existence its deepest significance.

In God's design, our earth is entrusted with its own commission, a positive religious function. About this, however, more will be said later. For the present, we should know that Revelation mentions another rôle our earth has to play, a negative religious rôle: the rôle of "world," in the sense frequently met with in Scripture, especially in St. John. The "world" in this rôle means the realm of wickedness, the kingdom of the evil one,

the place, too, of God's patience, the historical space abandoned for a while to its own determination, whilst the divine wrath bides its time in silence. Into that "world" Christ came down in order to save it. And in the midst of that same "world," He has planted His Church. Some of His followers may, in fact, belong to this "world," though He Himself is "not of the world" (Jn. 17: 14). However, taken in the aggregate, they all have in common, with and in Him, an inescapable task and calling regarding this world of sin and evil. In His sacerdotal prayer after the Last Supper, Christ addressed His Father: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not the world... As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17: 15-18).

The "world," where sin and its consequences hold sway, is thus the *place* where grace comes to us, where God speaks to us of love and reconciliation, where, with the Son and through the power of the Spirit, we return to the Father in faith and charity. We do so, with and in Christ, *because Christ Himself has done so*. And here we meet with the deepest significance of Redemption.

Redemption denotes a divine gesture, one and perfect: God's only begotten Son coming down into the "world" of our *perdition* and thence returning to the Father, not He alone, but *with all* those who share his sonship through the divine election and their own individual self-surrender. "I came forth from the Father and came into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father" (Jn. 16: 28). The value of the Redemption is not to be measured by the *total sum* of sufferings and humiliations undergone by Christ on the Cross; it is to be gauged by the *perfect acceptance, from the hands of the Father, of the situation* Jesus freely assumed in the "world." His messianic appearance in the "world" could not but cause a formidable avalanche of hatred, jealousy and scandal. And Christ accepted it all, for us, in our stead; but also to teach us by His example how to act in like manner in our respective callings and charges. St. Paul has

brought out, in a unique way, what the essence of Redemption is, when he wrote his celebrated text to the Philippians, a text which is still the basic theme running through the Paschal liturgy: "*He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross*" (Phil. 2: 8). Of Christ's obedience, the Cross is the culminating point, the supreme expression and, therefore, the highest visible symbol. Beyond dispute, the sum and substance of the Redemption must be sought for in *the love* of the Messiah, Son of God and most beautiful of men, which caused Him *to surrender Himself totally in humble obedience*. Indeed, that was the only way to defeat sin; for sin, at bottom, is nothing else than pride, rebellion and disobedience.

Christ's sanctity lay in His loving obedience to the Father. The grace He merited for us must consist in repeating, through life and till death, the Son's everlasting "Yes, Father," in loving obedience and surrender.

Grace in this World.

As it was with Christ, so it is with us. Our holiness, the call of grace, lies in an ever growing, ever more complete and humble acceptance of our life. And in this we can never be level-headed or business-like enough. It is this life on this earth which is in question, this actual situation, here and now. The cross, which we as Christians have to carry daily, is made up of our ailments, our failures, our discouragements, our sufferings, our weaknesses, our shame, our loneliness: all and everything borne in humble obedience, like, with and in Christ.

Here again, but from a higher religious standpoint, we perceive that grace does not alter, remove or mitigate the conse-

quences of sin on this earth, — not directly, at least. The “world” will remain what it always was: the place where God is silently patient, and for us, a place of exile. Grace in this life attacks sin in its marrow of pride and disobedience. All the rest stays. The seed of sin is to be destroyed on the exact spot where sin strikes its root, in our fundamental personal option, in our deep-seated proud rebellion against God. St. Augustine had in mind this all-important issue of our lives when he wrote: “Two societies have issued from two kinds of love: ...selfish love which dared to despise even God, ...love of God that is ready to trample upon self” (*De Civ. Dei*, 14, 18). We are now able to grasp the sense of “self-contempt.” The self to trample on is the self in as far as it is in league with the “world,” as it takes sides with sin and evil, and as it goes against God.

At this point in our considerations, we may mention one or another exceptional occurrence. Grace irrupts, palpably sometimes, into our impious world, when God works miracles or grants our petitions. Looking at miracles with the eyes of simple religious faith, we understand that they merely confirm the general rule laid down in the preceding paragraphs. For, miracles — and to a lesser degree, special instances of heard prayer — are given no meaning by God other than that of being signs of the divine presence, thus also signs of divine grace.

Of their nature, miracles are not so exceptional as we usually tend to believe. Let us recall that, in spite of His silence, God is ever present in the world and speaks to us of His love in the intimacy of our hearts; and further that, from the religious standpoint, God’s mysterious Providence has no other purpose than to “stand by” us in whatever situation we may have landed. Miracles and answers to prayer stand out as high-lights of God’s loving presence in our history. Far above the somber low-banked clouds of sin, God’s presence shines pure and piercing; in a miracle, the divine radiance breaks through.

In other words: to the eyes of faith, the world remains always open to and charged with divine power. In the event

of a miracle, this becomes momentarily perceptible in a divine *sign*.

On occasion, the Father breaks His patient silence and discreetly drops to His children the hint that He is there. Those unobtrusive delicate signs of consolation, fidelity and love have for sole aim to stimulate us in the performance of our ordinary task. No other task has been entrusted to us than that of accepting this life just as it is, in humble, obedient love, holding fast to the one irreplaceable mainstay, which is faith in Jesus Christ who is the personal manifestation and presence of God in this "world" of sin and evil. His Church will endure till the end of time as His sanctuary, His tabernacle of the Covenant, the visible pledge of His love. The other tokens God gave to mankind in the past become intelligible and are guaranteed in the light of God's manifesting Himself in the Incarnation; all are evidence that God is discreet, even when testing us by His "obscurities." Like a soft halo, they enshrine the one radiant, "tremendous" event on earth: Christ rising by His own power from the dead and becoming the "Lord," — God in our midst.

Pessimism?

Some readers, who have followed us so far, might have gathered the impression that the rôle assigned to grace here on earth cannot fail to lead to fatalism or pessimism. But let me be well understood. From Revelation we do, indeed, learn that the true purpose of Redemption is to bring us to accept fully the divine will regarding our concrete situation here below.

This is far from suggesting fatalism of any kind, not even the kind prevailing in Islam; for it is God's will also that, in the same situation, we do all we can to make the sufferings and disorders of this world as bearable as possible, both for ourselves and for our neighbour. A true son of the Church knows, as Christ did, that until Redemption reaches its full perfection on the last day, he dwells in the "world" where vanity, egoism, brutal will to power and pride will always endeavour from within to devour, defeat or utterly undo all medical, social, economic, technical and psychological progress. Did not a pagan say of old: "Quid sunt leges sine moribus?" No reform devised by human brain; a fortiori, no dangerous Fata Morgana mirage of an absolutely certain and irresistible human progress, can save man from the "world" where evil holds sway. The grace of Christ Jesus alone can do so by persuading us to follow the Lord's example of humble obedience.

To sum up what precedes: on the one hand, grace does not abolish the regular natural functioning, the structures and interrelations of this created world. On the other hand, during the interval separating Christ's Resurrection and Ascension from His return in glory on the last day, the divine power of grace attacks the roots of sin in every free person. In the sinner, and notably in the one who deliberately shuts out God, sin with all its evil consequences is in the ascendent. But the man in the state of grace is *in* the "world" though not *of* the "world," so says Our Lord Himself. Redemption and grace enable us to accept in humble obedience, like and with Christ, the concrete situation allotted to each one on earth by Providence; this is the way to engage in a head-on conflict with sin, to overcome and to destroy sin in its essence. This is also the way to meet and possess God.

Grace is Everything.

But faith tells us that life, besides its somber aspect, has also its bright side. The complete Christian picture of life has always eluded colorless, over-simplified formulas. The human mind is so very limited, its conceptions are so unavoidably infirm, that they often lead to heresy and sectarianism. God and the divine exceed all formulas. And so, in spite of a legitimate dose of pessimism, the true Christian should be radiant with an all-pervading optimism.

Grace gives us everything: the last point we want to consider.

The Positive Religious Value of the World.

First, a corrective as pendant to the preceding considerations. The universe in which we live displays also a positive religious aspect; and this, too, for and through Christ. By the mere fact that Christ entered into this world, the All Holy into the realm of sin, His humanity has affected the world to its very foundations. Because He was not only man but also God, the world has found in Him a new centre, a new basic principle and unifying law. In Christ's humanity and body, the material world as a whole has been blessed; in germ it has been freed from its curse and once again orientated Godward. *That is why, from now on,* nature and this earth are fit to serve as signs and instruments of God's grace in a rich symbolism, archetypes of which lie hidden for the most part in the human psyche. The sacraments, especially, are evidence of this; so also, to a lesser extent, is the Church's liturgy. Ambivalently and by way of suggestion, the rites and symbols of other religions bear the same witness.

There is more. God has decreed that Redemption, and thus grace, should come to man through the cooperation of other men. As we are mutually dependent on each other in the line of good and evil, Christ's great mercy has willed that no man should be saved without the cooperation of other men. To put it differently: we can and must work out with Christ the salvation of the world. It does not follow, though, that in this cooperation — or in any other capacity — we take up our stand next to Christ as His equals, as associates on a par with Him. Etymologically, the term "cooperation" is here too crude. We are allowed to work *with* Christ for the salvation of the world as far as we let ourselves be borne along and used by the One Saviour to bring all men to Him, and in as much as in our life Christ's life and action radiate His influence on our neighbor.

Every man, on receiving grace, has this duty imposed upon him. And this holds true for him who would receive grace outside the visible Church. But in the ultimate purpose and meaning of the Mystical Body, it is the prerogative of the Church to be, as body of Christ the head, the carrier and executive of His will and operation. In that light one may say that no grace, not even the most intimately personal one, is granted to the individual for himself alone; it must redound to the progress of the apostolate and to the general good of the Church.

Christian Humanism.

Since all things have become, through the Incarnation, the instruments of Christ's almighty power, we are in duty bound to press into service anything that is good or useful to make Christ known. Grace and nature are two widely different realities: grace belongs properly to the divine order, nature does not.

The latter should not be neglected on that account. Such things as culture, humanism, civilization, adequate welfare, corporal and psychic health, artistic refinement of mind, alliances between nations, even science and technique: *normally*, all have their share in the call of contributing to the salvation of mankind.

All things are called to serve. First, they serve as a negative preparation for grace. The less a man is hampered in his worship of God, the better for him. Culture, science and refinement may differ in nature from grace; competently used, however, they clear away many obstacles that hinder the action of God's Spirit. Herein lies precisely their negative rôle. It stands to reason that people will not be ready to lend an attentive ear to the message of grace as long as they are weighed down by the ceaseless worry of securing their daily morsel of bread; in such conditions they cannot but grow stunted and brutalized. No doubt, God sometimes works in surprising ways; but experience has taught the Church that such is not God's *usual* way. J. H. Newman had this same experience in mind when he wrote, as a convert, that persecution, with its ensuing ghetto-mentality, ends with leaving such an impression on the Catholic masses that few among them escape immune from it. A certain degree of political and social freedom is necessary to create a climate favorable to grace. And that is why the Church has always actively promoted a civilizing uplift whenever her missionary work lay among primitive races. She was far from thinking that a new convert could not be a good Christian unless he was also a good Portuguese or a good Spaniard, — as has been asserted by some writers; but she knows that poverty, slavery or barbarism are obstacles to the efflorescence of grace.

The purely human values, which — let us repeat — are not grace in essence, possess in God's salvific plan a positive value all their own. Unlike ignorance, barbarism and backwardness, they provide signs and symbols of God's eternal beauty, wisdom and glory. History shows that the Church has always considered it a divine mandate to foster science and culture, even when she had to face the task alone; her architecture and her liturgy are

there to prove it. The Church firmly believes that in the beauty of nature or of art, and in the truth of science, lie hidden the marvels of God's own beauty and wisdom. Should we ask for an unquestionable charter for Christian humanism, we have only to turn to the epistle to the Philippians. Paul speaks first of the grace, the joy and peace caused by Christ's living presence in our midst: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is nigh!... And the peace of the Lord, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." The Apostle then continues: "For all the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever venerable, whatsoever just, whatsoever pure, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever commendable, if there be any virtue and if anything is praiseworthy, think on these things" (Phil. 4: 4-8).

The World, a Life's Task.

It is possible to proceed still further in the consideration of the world's positive value. The world is God's gift. Every divine gift imposes an obligation because it is conferred on a free person. The world, it is true, has been singularly damaged by sin and robbed of its original purpose; but rampant evil cannot alter the fact that the world remains a gift, a workshop to serve as both room and instrument for culture and knowledge. This last remark enables us to round off our argument. When we grant that a life of grace is nothing but a life of obedience on the very spot where God has placed us and where His grace and calling reach us, it follows that our earthly task of civilizing and mastering the universe falls within the wide scope of that

very same obedience. For those who are servants of God and brothers of Christ, in and through grace, the world, with all it contains, recovers its primordial meaning. And so, grace means really everything to the baptized Christian. Whether good or evil, all things turn through grace into a definite duty and task. Paul says as much when he enlarges on the glories of the spirit and of grace, and then adds: "We know that to them who love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints," — a text which might be interpreted: "We know for certain that God directs all things to secure the good of those that love Him, those whom He has called for the fulfilment of His designs" (Rom. 8: 28).

We may conclude. Christian humanism is not entrusted only with the *negative rôle* of clearing external obstacles out of the way of grace, or with the mere task of *serving* the Church in her apostolate. It should take pride in the *profound positive and religious vocation* received in and through grace. God's word makes the world transparent, turns it into a shrine and tabernacle of the divine living presence. More still, all goodness, truth, virtue and beauty, concealed in the world, has been given to us in commission. Our humble obedience to grace, which is the secret of our salvation, demands that we take it all in hand, use it, cause it to bloom. A Catholic doctor finds in his faith a deeper, more convincing motive for a competent practice of his profession; so also, the poet, the engineer, the social worker, any laborer or farmer. To put it in other words: our earthly career does not lie *outside* our Christian calling, but, on the contrary, well within it. Or more correctly still: our deep fundamental self-surrender to God in faith and charity has to find expression in the concrete details of our earthly career and dedication. On this level, too, we are God's fellow-workers. The world is to us a "divin milieu" in which our earthly life achieves, thanks to God's love, its fullest meaning.

These thoughts offer us the welcome opportunity of quoting a text of Ruysbroeck, often alluded to on previous occasions. The quotation shows how all the views, set forth so far, are

brought together into one sober, genuinely religious vision of the world: "You know well that a meeting is a gathering of two persons coming from different places which in themselves are opposite and apart. Now, Christ comes from above as a lord and generous donor who can do all things. We come from below (from earth) as poor folk, devoid of strength and in need of everything. Christ comes in us *from within outwards*, and *we come to Him from outside inwards*. And for this reason, a spiritual meeting must here take place." (1) The words "we come from outside inwards" are now very telling. Beyond but through our *exterior* deeds of obedience, occupation and dedication, we tend to Christ *interiorly*. Here as always, especially in the supernatural order, we humans are concerned with the interiorizing process. Our incalculable, scattered, insignificant daily actions should lead us, deep down in our heart, to the great surrender in faith and love from outside inwards.

Matter and Divine Grace.

We have, so far, emphasized rather strongly how sharply grace is divided from the world. We accepted the term "world" in its twofold meaning: first, the meaning of space and "stage" for our human activity, and secondly, the meaning of "kingdom of the evil one." This emphasis was necessary, mainly in reaction against a lowering, ultimately pagan, humanism which by-passes the exalted, unique nobility of a life of grace. But all reactions in the field of thought suffer fatally from one-sidedness. Accents are shifted to the extent of falsifying the picture as a whole, or of blotting out the correct accents. That was the way with heresy in the past.

(1) *The Spiritual Epousals*, translated by Eric Colledge, London, 1952, 143, also on p. 92.

When dealing with what is peculiar to grace, one is apt to strain after orthodoxy to the point of not doing justice to the wealth of God's Revelation. In the mind of the Greek Fathers, there existed no possible doubt but that the sacraments acted also on man's body. With apparent unconcern, they looked upon grace in terms of our bodily substance: grace meant for them immortality and everlastingness. This is all the more remarkable because the Greek Fathers were the great exponents of the transcendence of grace; grace was for them a divinisation (*theopoiesis*); just as for Irenaeus, the Eucharist was the food and drink of immortality. It is probable that those Fathers were indebted for their ways of expression to some contemporaries of theirs, disciples of Plato and Plotinus, two philosophers ruthlessly differentiating what (to their mind) is divine in the spirit from what is sinful in matter; but the essentials of their faith they drew from other sources: they found it in Holy Scripture.

The Semitic mind, embodied in Scripture (even in the Greek portion of the New Testament) sees no clear-cut distinction in man between spirit and matter. Flesh (*sarx*), soul (*psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*) are three nouns standing *for the whole man in his totality*; they mean man seen now in his religious helplessness as creature, then in his sinning weakness, or again steeped in a sinful state of estrangement from God, or finally, filled with the Spirit of God, the "Pneuma" par excellence.

Modern mind has recaptured something of sense of totality. We have already pointed out that we are not souls tied to foreign bodies. As man, each one of us is but one unit, always itself, though in two manners of being which conflict with each other. We are wholly spirit and person, but after the manner of a spiritual, autonomous self-possession. We are wholly matter, but after the manner of a being that grows and expands in time and space. We have not here two substances, rather unhappily stuck together; but two poles, two sources of energy, one subordinate to the other. That is why it is more exact to speak of two moments of one complex spiritual being confined to time and

space, but of which the spiritual moment, aided by grace, holds the primacy.

Earlier in this book, we have insisted on the fact that grace affects only our innermost spiritual core, permeating it and raising it. Along the same line of thought, we have shown that the significance of miracles is nothing but the manifestation of the divine presence in a world that has emptied itself of God. These statements must stand. But, in order that they do not become one-sided and false, the other aspect must be kept in mind as well: that man, even under the influence of grace, remains one organic whole.

Maintaining all we have said before, we now assert that grace affects our being also in its material aspect, already here on earth. Both our body and the entire cosmos (two things that have not to be thought of as divided from each other) receive a true germ of immortality, everlastingness and resurrection, — first, in virtue of Christ's Redemption, and secondly, in virtue of our own personal grace of reconciliation. Our whole cosmic existence is necessarily involved in the reality of our rebirth in Christ. At the risk of dangerous misunderstanding and exaggeration on the part of over-simplifying readers, we shall make free to say that the sacraments, too, have their significance towards curing the body. The danger we allude to is not an imaginary one. We find evidence of it in some theologians who teach that the first and principal fruit of Extreme Unction is the healing of the sick. It is not hard to see what vain and false anticipation such unqualified statements are likely to raise in the mind of the average Catholic; but they contain, nonetheless, some elements of truth. In the same order of thought, we could prove positively that miracles, seen in all their implications, convey to man a foretaste, a pledge and anticipation of final cure and resurrection. They are more than mere signs and symbols of Christ's victory over sickness, suffering and death; they are pregnant symbols, containing in germ what they witness to and signify. Neither our body nor the cosmos, as a whole, remain unaffected by the mighty upheaval God's love causes in the silent secrecy of the

heart. And in this sense, we are justified in asserting that grace means everything in life. From now on, we have the pledge of our resurrection; or better, we are risen already, seminally. We possess within us the seed of everlasting life, the remedy for all sickness, pain and death. What are infirmities, grief and dying if not sin made visible and tangible in this world? Besides, it is fitting that the triumphant Lord should, from now on, conquer the countless manifestations of sin rampant in the world. But let us repeat once more: all this does not alter the fact that we are living in a world of sin and evil, of sickness and death, and that it is in this world that we have to find God in and through His first love.

Grace and Psychology.

Something more has to be said. A great deal of attention is focussed today on man, his psychology, his nature and way of life. The question arises: does grace exercise any influence on man's psychology?

It has already been pointed out that, in the present order, grace leaves man's psychology fundamentally unaltered. But thus set down, our words run the risk of over-simplifying matters. It bears repeating that psychic health and balance are in themselves quite different from grace, — though on this point we have made some important corrective and concessive qualifications. We can to some extent acquire, improve or redress them after one or other disturbance; we can in part maintain them by human methods, sometimes by medicaments or even surgery. But grace is exclusively God's gratuitous gift in Christ. Further, the life of grace is made known to us only through faith.

This is precisely the reason why, in the conclusion of the second part of our book, we drew attention to the fact that grace is granted to those also who are burdened with a psychosis, or are sorely tried in their psychic equilibrium. Should such men, aided by grace, surrender themselves to God in the depth of their soul, they can really reach a high state of sanctity. Of course, they would not lead lives of virtue fit for ecclesiastical canonization. The purpose of canonization is largely conditioned by the requirements of the Church's history on earth. Canonizations, to be sure, remind the faithful of heaven. But when the Church canonizes, she intends primarily to propose to the piety and imitation of the faithful those followers of Christ whom divine Providence has raised up to be models of a virtuous Christian life. The providential design of raising canonized saints in the Church according to the needs of the times has been dwelt upon by many writers in recent years. Now, in the case of persons undeniably privileged by grace but psychologically disordered through no fault of theirs, spiritual oddities or morbid character traits would prevent them from being held up as models for imitation in the Church. Nonetheless, psychological disturbances are not necessarily obstacles to grace. God's ways are wonderful: He may, when He wants, destine some interiorly distraught souls to the sublime, if harrowing, vocation of imitating Christ forsaken and desolate in the garden of Gethsemani; and this *in spite*, or rather by means of, their shattered psychic condition. The essential requirement for holiness is the same for all: a faithful "yes" to the call of God, manifest in the particular concrete situation of existence which His wisdom has chosen for each one; the case of the psychotic man is no exception to the rule.

From the moment such a man has made his fundamental surrender to God, he will tend to express it and live up to it in his daily actions; like any other human being, he has no other option. In him, however, the expression, execution and consciousness of this surrender to grace will be heavily handicapped, muddled up and traversed by psychic anxieties and disturbances. He may be tried by endless scruples; he may live under a perma-

nent sway of a dark interior depression; he may forever relapse into aggressive fits of temper; though he may suffer from any form of psychic disease, he is in no way prevented from accepting himself from God's hand as he is, with the right dispositions of whole-hearted humility and self-abasement. Though he be hovering on the brink of insanity, he can still, in moments of lucidity, answer the merciful voice of God, throw himself in His arms and moan with the Psalmist: "Out of the depth I have cried to Thee, O Lord" (Ps. 129: 1). In his own depressed and anxious manner, he can exclaim with and in Christ: "Father, into Thy hands, I commend my spirit" (Lc. 24: 26). Such cases do occur; they belong to history; but unfortunately they are not generally known.

However, such is not the normal way of grace. To quote Ruysbroeck for the last time: Christ comes in us "from within outwards." God's grace transforms, heals and raises our fundamental option. The *normal way* with God's saving action is that, from this interior rebirth of the heart, an efficacious virtue should flow and little by little permeate, strengthen, unify and enkindle human activity as a whole. In the ordinary designs of divine love, the process of interior unification in God achieves a behaviour authentically human, a perfect psychic integration. The divine action of grace promotes an interior harmony of all our powers, aspirations and impulses, not only in order to purify them, but to give them deeper root and greater intensity. God works "from within outwards." Grace radiates outward when it is given free scope in our life.

Grace brings with it peace and joy, even in the midst of pain, trial and desolation, because it attaches and directs the heart to God. That peace and that joy do not well up from a mundane source; but they prolong themselves, re-echoing in the human psychic self. Increasing attention is given today in psychology and psychiatry to the energy and balance generated by interior repose, by contentment with self and others, by joy and above all by esteem and love. Nothing enriches or fulfils human life so much as the genuine respect, esteem and affection

of others; they re-act potently upon the psychic human self; they contribute to our bodily functions and general health. The Christian is indebted to faith for a deeper insight into his sinfulness; but he owes to it also a blissful awareness of the Father's unique love in Christ for his lowliness and impotence. No one can fail to see that faith purifies, unifies and strengthens even, on the merely human level — the *normal* outcome of a living, supernatural faith. Few people seem to realize and acknowledge this after-effect, because too many deliberately refuse to cooperate with grace. Within that class must be reckoned a number of persons especially consecrated to God. Victims of neurasthenia and moral depression are met with in religious houses. The causes are not always the same. In the case of cloistered communities, the blame lies sometimes with the neglect of the elementary laws of corporal and psychological hygiene on the part of the superiors; these are often appointed to leadership more on account of their over-wrought piety than because of their knowledge of men. And that cannot be helped. However, the source of mental upsets, with far worse consequences, must be sought on a deeper level. It is to be traced back to infidelity to grace, shown perhaps in the spiritual mediocrity with which the divine call is lived up to. Let a man give himself to God entirely and definitively, and without ceasing to be a limited one-sided human being, and he will take up his stand on another level: the level of the saints. All the lives of the saints are enchanting, unique, arresting. Blinkered, moralizing hagiographers do their best to portray them all in the same drab colours, stripped of all originality. But a look at the actual facts of their history is enough to convince us that originality and intensity of life is nowhere so finely displayed as in the world of the saints. Each one of them, borne along by grace, has been surprisingly faithful to the bent of his own particular temperament and character, as given to him by Providence. The well-spring of originality lies hidden in each one's fundamental liberty. And as grace heals and raises just that fundamental liberty, the world of the saints cannot but be most attractive, arresting and fascinating.

Scripture teaches the same lesson. Whatever some moralizing preachers may say, Holy Scripture, especially the epistles, insist on the fact that Christ's grace in us must shine as a *witness and revelation* of God's glory. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5: 16). Nowhere do we find attention so frequently called to the high duty of *rejoicing* in the risen redeeming Christ. Christian joy is our principal testimony. The Church has traversed periods of such ruthless persecution that joy remained the one way in which the Christian could bear witness to his faith, though harassed and sent to death. Bernanos makes his Carmelite nuns sing throughout the night preceding their trial in prison, and after the trial, up to the very steps of the guillotine. In this, history bears him out. Grace is indeed all-important to us, even from the point of view of human psychology.

How could it be otherwise? To a lover everything shines with love. Shadows vanish and light illumines all things. Sickness, care and failure become trifling, easy to bear. If this is so with human love, what must it be in the case of a man filled with the love of God? Gone are the conventions of a routine Catholic life that has locked itself up and stiffened into lifeless, set formulas and practices. Can true religion be lived in a rut? The question answers itself.

Conclusion.

We shall be short. Catholicism is without illusions, level-headed and realistic, — like God who sees all and judges all in the light of truth. The Catholic outlook on life, based on the theology of grace and Redemption, is probably a great deal more pessimistic than what some pagans of antiquity have thought of man; more somber also than what many modern pagans advertise today as enlightened wisdom of life. Basic in our faith is the knowledge that we dwell in a world of sin, that we are affected by it the core of our being and that the absolute heinousness of sin is to be discovered only in the shadow of the Cross. No one can show himself naively optimistic, though we meet here and there with Christians who play up to the mood of their contemporaries by edulcorating and attenuating our pessimism with their own notions of a humanism that keeps too little of Christ's teaching.

But just because we are pessimistic on the score of man and the world, we can afford to be intensely optimistic and happy. Our life of grace is so deeply rooted in Christ that our triumph in and with Him is assured already here below. "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (Jo. 16: 33). Those words, taken from the farewell speech of Jesus to His disciples, are a lasting treasure for all of us to carry in our hearts. The conscious remembrance of them will cause happiness and joy to grow in a steady crescendo. We are saved. To the saved, in grace and love, everything existing takes on a new look. In everything, everywhere and always, we recognize the features of Christ: "The bleeding head so wounded" no less than the glorified face on Thabor and Easter morning. "This is the day which the Lord hath made. Let us be glad and rejoice therein."

